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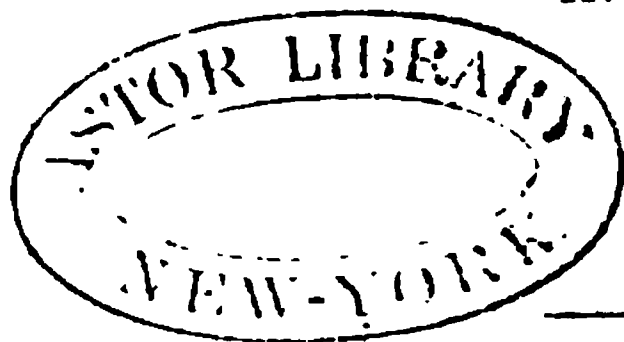
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ELEMENTS
OF
MORAL PHILOSOPHY,
AND OF
CHRISTIAN ETHICS.

BY
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IN TWO VOLUMES.



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THE ELEMENTS
OF
MORAL PHILOSOPHY.

BOOK III.
ON THE GROUNDS AND PRINCIPLES OF MORAL
OBLIGATION.

CHAPTER I.

THE INTIMATIONS OF A SUPREME MORAL GOVERNMENT TO
WHICH WE ARE ACCOUNTABLE.

THE being and perfections of God having been proved, it follows, that he is the proprietor of all things, and that he is the supreme moral governor of all. What other end could he have in the creation of all things than the manifestation of his own perfections, and the advancement of his own glory? That this end might be attained, he has placed on our world a being endowed with a capacity of discovering through the works of nature their author and their end, and of giving him the worship and adoration to which he is entitled; and while he has given him dominion over the inferior animals, he has fixed the order of all things in subserviency to his happiness.

That God governs the world is as clear as that he is its author, and is proved by the same means.

Throughout the kingdoms of animate and inanimate nature, we observe an order so fixed and uniform, that we confidently reckon on its permanency. According to a few general laws, or principles, which the Lord and Ruler of all has established, are the varieties of the seasons and the glories of nature regularly produced. The sun by its light and heat is at once the means by which we discern objects, and the cause of moisture and of vegetation. Gravitation by its uniform action preserves the planets in their orbits, gives adhesion to the parts of the globe, and stability to the artificial structures which man erects on its surface; it is the cause of the alternate elevation and depression of the sea in the phenomena of tides; it drains the earth of its superfluous moisture by rivers; and communicates to our atmosphere that equal pressure which is necessary generally to our bodies, and more especially to inspiration in breathing. We see also among the tribes of the inferior animals an order established, not less constant, chiefly occasioned by those instinctive properties and tendencies which God has implanted in their nature, and to which they yield unvarying subjection. These, and all the other phenomena of the universe, are produced by the Creator and Preserver of all things, and shew him to be the wise and supreme ruler and governor of the works which he has formed. To the seas he has set a bound that they may not pass over, that they turn not again to cover the earth. “He sendeth the springs into the valleys which run among the hills: they give drink to every beast of the field. He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for

the service of man ; that he may bring forth food out of the earth—He appointed the moon for seasons ; the sun knoweth his going down. Thou makest darkness, and it is night ; wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening. O Lord, how manifold are thy works ! in wisdom hast thou made them all : the earth is full of thy riches. So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. These wait all upon thee ; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather : thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled ; thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created : and thou renewest the face of the earth. The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever : the Lord shall rejoice in his works.”

The government of God over the works he has made is adapted to their nature, properties, and designs. He is, therefore, the Supreme Moral Governor of man, whose authority he is bound to obey, and to whom he is accountable. And as God has not left himself, in any department of his works, without a witness in regard to his being and perfections, so neither has he with respect to his moral government ; but has given intimations of it sufficiently numerous

and powerful to leave those without excuse who comply not with its requirements. It will, therefore, be my endeavour to prove, in the first place, that the existence of the moral government of God in regard to his intelligent creatures is clearly discoverable from the light of nature ; and in the second place, that this government is conducted in such a way in the present life, as unavoidably to lead our views to the certainty of a future.

CHAPTER II.

THE MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD DISCOVERABLE FROM THE LIGHT OF NATURE.

THE moral government of God, the supreme King and Ruler of all, is clearly discoverable from the light of nature. When I speak of his moral government, it is scarcely necessary to remark, that I mean that government which is suited to creatures possessed of intelligence and understanding, liberty of choice and accountableness,—attributes with which man is endowed. Being endowed with these valuable qualities, by which he is constituted head of the visible creation, he is capable of obedience, and, therefore, bound to obey the divine will, wherever discovered, as the expression of immutable rectitude, as the law of the universe, and as the spring of life, and order, and happiness. His obligations to render this obedience, as they are undoubted, so are they constantly accu-

mulating, from the continuance of his being, and in the possession of his exalted faculties, from the varied and boundless kindness of God, and from the numerous motives to virtuous conduct which his present circumstances, as well as his future prospects, present. This holds true of man, even when enjoying nothing more than the light of nature. For though his obligations are in proportion to his capacity, to the means given him for knowing the will of God, and the aids he possesses in its performance; and, consequently, are greatly increased by the light of the gospel; yet, this light does not diminish or impair the obligations which previously and necessarily exist.

It is clear, from more considerations than I can at present enlarge upon, that mankind, without revelation, have some notions of the authority, nature, and design of God's moral government. From the constitution of their own mind are these forced on their attention, as often as they reflect on the perfection of God, and especially on his wisdom, power, free-agency and goodness. The admission of each of these attributes as belonging to him follows from the admission of his existence.

Possessing, as the Creator of all, infinite intelligence, he must be unmerring in wisdom. He who is everywhere present, and whose intelligence is everywhere co-existing with his presence; whose habitation is eternity, and to whom all the possible occurrences of an endless duration are intimately known; who pervades and surrounds the infinitude of space, and has in his view all beings, events, and contingencies,

must surely be possessed of wisdom and understanding to a degree incomprehensible by us. With these perfections he is not only acquainted with all possible substances, together with their properties and powers, but with all their possible relations, and the effects which in these relations they are capable of producing: knowing, therefore, in all cases what is best to be done, and the best time for the performance of all things, the creation and preservation of the world can only be considered as the effects of supreme and unerring wisdom. These are the grounds on which it is obvious that he who has given being to the universe, and who conducts it to that consummation which he alone comprehends, possesses wisdom, which in point of extent is far beyond the limits of our understanding, and which in itself must be truly infinite.

His power is also unlimited. The omnipotence that can call an insect from nothing into life, is really as incomprehensible by us as that which can create and suspend in space a thousand systems of revolving worlds. The effect of the one exertion, indeed, is more astonishing and magnificent; but the other is not less illustrative of infinite power. The will of the self-existent Creator is power. His will, and his will alone, forms the reason why any other being besides himself exists in infinite space, and it is the active energy which formed and sustains all things. He, therefore, is omnipotent, as he is the source of all the power that anywhere exists. There can be no virtue or influence in any cause or agent but what depends on, and has proceeded from him, the Supreme Agent, and the first cause. His pleasure is sovereign

and irresistible : for he doth according to his will, in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth ; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou ? He commandeth the sun, and it riseth not ; and sealeth up the stars : he alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waters of the sea. He doth great things past finding out, yea, and marvellous things without number. Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering. He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing. Lo, these are part of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him ! But the thunder of his power who can understand ?

The Almighty is also possessed of the most perfect liberty of action ; that is, he is a free agent. I shall make no other observation in proof of this than this single remark, that the existence of the most perfect liberty of action is essential to the personality of the Deity. His goodness, therefore, in its exercise and communication, is the goodness of a being infinitely wise, powerful, free, and holy, and imparted in accordance with the laws and designs of his moral government. We are thus unavoidably led to a perception and acknowledgment of his moral as well as his natural perfections, and consequently to believe, that he conducts the government of his intelligent creatures with a reference to their moral as well as to their physical good. His love to moral purity and loveliness, must, from the boundless excellency of his nature, and from his intuitively beholding what is right, be infinite ; and therefore we are warranted in

the conclusion, that He who rules all things wisely and well, has subjected man to that moral authority and government which are adapted to his nature. This is necessary to secure his greatest and ultimate good ; and it is impossible that the Deity, pure, and powerful, and free, who views with the approbation or disapprobation of a righteous Governor and Judge the conduct of his rational offspring, could have been restrained by any internal cause or external circumstance, from appointing it.

This conclusion is strengthened, when we consider the moral agency, the capacities, and the elevated rank of man in the scale of being : that is, a free agent, or accountable creature, who is endowed with intelligence and understanding, with a sense of the desert of moral good and evil, of approbation and disapprobation, reward and punishment, with a liberty of choice, and a power of acting according to that choice ; and who wants not the means necessary for the practice of virtue, and for abstaining from vice. Such a being is man ; he is endowed with the capacity of perceiving certain actions as right or as wrong, as beautiful or the contrary ; and as conferring merit or demerit on the agent. He has the feeling of pain in the recollection of evil which he has done, and of pleasure and self-approbation, of the good which he has performed. There is within him a power which forces him to pass judgment upon himself and upon his actions ; which pronounces some actions to be in themselves just, right, good ; others to be in themselves, evil, wrong, unjust ; which, without being consulted, without being advised with, magisterially

exerts itself; and approves or condemns the doer of them accordingly; and which, if not forcibly stopped, naturally and always of course goes on to anticipate a higher and more effectual sentence, which shall hereafter second and affirm its own. This is the power by which man is a law to himself. The mighty operation of which makes tyrants tremble in the midst of their guards, which, in the doom it previously pronounced in Belshazzar's breast, almost conveyed to him the meaning of the hand-writing on the wall, and which by its peaceful and approving voice has cheered the loneliness of a prison to patriots and martyrs.

Thus, man has a perception of the qualities of actions, as morally right or wrong in consequence, not of arbitrary appointment, but of eternal distinctions, which are antecedent to all law, and to which laws of every kind owe their force and obligation. His perceptions of right and wrong denote the qualities of actions as they really and necessarily are, and not what they are in virtue of an arbitrary decree, or power, or enactment. Does not this moral constitution with which man is endowed, and which he cannot violate without the infliction of pain and misery on himself, shew how well he is made acquainted with his obligations to obey the authority of God, the supreme moral governor and judge? There are certain elementary and fundamental principles in morals so thoroughly engraven on the heart, that mankind in all circumstances and ages are familiar with them, and take their truth for granted; as, for example, that there are some things in human conduct

that merit approbation and praise, others that deserve blame and punishment; that different degrees either of approbation or of blame are due to different actions; that we may be highly culpable in omitting what we ought to have done, as well as in doing what we ought not; that we ought to perform our duty so far as we know it; and should use the best means in our power for informing ourselves concerning it.

It has been alleged as an objection to the moral endowments and accountableness of man, or rather, to the existence of an original moral faculty, that a diversity of opinion has prevailed in different ages and nations in regard to the morality of particular actions. If that which is the object of moral approbation in one age or country, be the object of disapprobation in another, have we any good ground for thinking that there is an inherent faculty in our nature by which we judge of actions as right or wrong, and of their doers as praise or blame worthy? Are we not aware that among some nations it has been held lawful for a parent to sell his children for slaves, and in their infancy to abandon them to wild beasts; that it has been lawful to punish children even capitally for the crime of their parent; that the murdering of an enemy in cold blood was once a common practice; and that human sacrifices, impious no less than immoral, were of old very general? But these facts do not disprove the reality of conscience as natural to man; they only shew that it has been at different times, and in different countries, restrained in its exercise, and perverted in its judgments. Its operation is somewhat perverted in

certain cases by education, which has so great an influence on the formation of our opinions and moral habits. Its decisions are rendered less clear and decided also by a long-continued resistance to its admonitions, and by erroneous speculative opinions. No one doubts the close connexion between the notions which we imbibe concerning our duty and the manner of our performing it. When I consider the errors which in almost every country are blended with the most important truth, and the gross ignorance and superstition in which the majority of so many nations are involved, in place of being surprised that there are deviations in their moral sentiments, I am struck with the nearness of the uniformity, and cannot but regard it as a conclusive proof of conscience being an original and inherent power in the mind of man. This is the monitor which God has superadded to reason, which while it shews us the essential distinction between what is right and wrong in actions, between virtue and vice, reminds us of the high and glorious purposes for which our nature has been formed.

A being thus constituted, it is obvious, must feel himself to be the subject of God's moral government. Capable, as he is, of knowing, loving, and obeying the Creator, and of reverencing his glorious perfections, he is the only creature in this world who can shew his gratitude for the divine goodness, and give religious worship and adoration. The possession of such powers prove, that while a leading end of every thing around him is to secure the convenience and happiness of man, the great design of his being is, to glorify the God that made him, by conforming himself

to his will, submitting to his law, and acquiescing in his appointments. Can He who has conferred these powers, to be employed for this end, be indifferent whether this willing obedience be given him? Does not the existence of such powers and capacities in our nature create obligations which our own hearts tell us cannot be violated with impunity, and for the discharge of which, our reason and our feelings inform us, that we are accountable to the supreme moral Governor and Judge?

This conviction is confirmed when we observe, even in the present life, the existence and operation of the divine moral government. The authoritative decisions of conscience within, in regard to the qualities and awards of actions as virtuous or vicious, are ratified by the established order of providence. We find in actual experience that conformity with the will of God, whether that is made known by the voice of conscience, or in any other way, is attended with tranquillity of mind: while the violation of it is followed by remorse and misery. As the exercise of pure and benevolent affections gives pleasure and exhilarates the mind, the indulgence of evil passions wounds and depresses it. He who made us for the exalted purposes of his own glory, has rendered it impossible for us to entertain any wrathful passion, any selfish affection, or malignant feeling, without suffering a proportional privation of happiness; and accordingly, the man who lives in malice and envy, who repines at the prosperity of others, or who wishes them evil, injures his own peace.

This connexion between virtue and happiness,

and between evil affections, or evil actions and the retributive awards of divine justice, is seen in the daily history of mankind, and we have the most ample attestations of its reality within our own personal observation and experience. The tendency, as every one knows, of integrity, uprightness, industry, and honesty, is to secure respect and comfort; while the natural tendency of the opposite is, to lead to wretchedness and want. Profligacy is followed by remorse, and disease and embarrassment; and intemperance has in its train, peevishness, an impaired constitution, and a premature death. Idleness and negligence bring after them disorder in our affairs, and consequent poverty and disgrace. Oppression, though surrounded by power, generally produces its own overthrow, and ambition, though it sweeps all resistance before it, cannot long subdue the elements that work its destruction. The whole established arrangements of providence are, in no inconsiderable degree, retributive, as they secure to different virtues appropriate rewards, and to different vices appropriate punishments. So fixed and permanent is this order, that parents take it for granted while they attempt, in the education of their children, to implant those principles and maxims in their minds, which will lead them in future life to the exercise of integrity, and prudence, and industry. This divine system of moral government under which we are placed, though not complete, and though in some cases it would seem to make no distinction between the righteous and the wicked, is far more perfect even now in its retributive awards, than we are sometimes

ready to believe ;—as it is conducted impartially, and without respect of persons,—as it punishes vice and rewards virtue in the same way, whoever may be the individuals by whom they are practised,—as it visits the negligence, imprudence, or indolence of the pious and upright with poverty and distress, while it secures to the industry and activity of the wicked abundance,—and as it follows sin with chastisement, even when the persons by whom it is committed give ample evidence otherwise of their general integrity and uprightness.

In the distribution of the light and darkness, the happiness and misery of human life, it is clearly shewn, that man is now the subject of the supreme moral government, and that God, who neither is, nor can be, indifferent to his conduct, holds him accountable. He, the Great Lord and Ruler of all, convinces him of this, not only by the favourable regard with which he treats the virtuous, but by the marks of his displeasure which the established order of his providence has affixed to all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. To shew that all are, to some extent, blameable, having failed, and come short of the great end of their being, it is appointed unto all once to die. This appointment is so fixed and irreversible, that it is viewed as one of the ordinary dispensations of the divine government, and is as confidently reckoned on, as the return of the seasons.

The truth of these observations, illustrative of the reality of the supreme moral system of government to which man is subject, is confirmed, when we consider the design and necessity of human government. It is

the ordination of providence that human beings should be placed under authority from the period of their entrance into the world ;—that they should be trained up in families, where they are taught submission to parental direction and control, and are prepared to discharge all the duties and relations of life with propriety and attention. They are also under civil government, to render obedience to its laws, and enjoy its protection. Every such government is, and necessarily must be, both from the constitution of man, and from the course and order which God has established, of a moral nature ; that is, its avowed and fundamental principle must be, the reward of the righteous and the punishment of the wicked, the rendering unto men according to their works, whether good or evil. Though the imperfection of man, and of all his institutions, may prevent him from exactly proportioning his awards to the personal merits or demerits of those whom he governs, the administration of his government must, professedly, at least, be carried on according to this rule. For this is beyond the power of tyranny itself long and with impunity to alter. The appointed course of nature and providence, fixed and regular as the unchanging ordinances of heaven, renders it necessary to the very existence of society, that vice, as such, should be the object of punishment, and that virtue, as such, should be the object of protection and reward. When was it ever heard, that any government, the most oppressive and unprincipled, professed to encourage the vices of falsehood, injustice, cruelty, deceit, and dishonesty, and to proscribe the virtues of truth, integrity, and

humanity? Virtuous persons have, indeed, been punished as evil-doers, and wicked men have been often rewarded; but this was not only an inversion of the settled order of things, but done under the avowed assumption of punishing the bad, and of rewarding the good. The reality of the eternal distinction between virtue and vice was necessarily taken for granted by Nero and Caligula as much as by the wisest and the best of governors; since without this assumption, laws would be totally void of authority and sanction.

The inference which I would deduce from this is, that as man cannot exist in society, that is, in reality, cannot exist at all in this world without being the subject of moral law and government, it is clearly manifest that he is under the authoritative obligations of his great moral Governor and Judge. What else is the government of parents and of magistrates, but the divine providence and authority exercised in a particular way, intended to remind those who are subject to it, that they are moral agents, formed so as to be instrumental in their own happiness or ruin, and accountable to God for the use of their talents and the improvement of their opportunities?

CHAPTER III.

THE MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD IS SO CONDUCTED AS TO LEAD OUR VIEWS TO A FUTURE STATE.

THE moral government of God is conducted in such a way in the present life, as unavoidably to lead our views to a future state of being. The reality of such a state is impressed on the mind by reflecting on the intellectual and moral constitution of man, by which he is capable of indefinite and endless improvement, and fitted for enjoying far greater happiness than falls to his lot in the present life. There is, besides, nothing in death that warrants the presumption that it is the entire destruction of our being. The organs through which the soul in this introductory state of being holds intercourse with the material world, are indeed dissolved; but why should this imply the extinction of the living principle of thought and activity?

The greatness of the transition from the embodied to the disembodied state, leads us to conjecture that the soul in making it will undergo a mighty change; but to infer its annihilation from this circumstance, is not only an assumption perfectly gratuitous, but contrary to all the analogies of nature. How different is the state of the same identical being, as to capacity of action, exertion, and enjoyment, in the course of the few fleeting years of mortal existence? Who that witnessed Newton when a babe, could have anticipated the day when he should describe the movements, and measure the laws of other worlds. The

various and wonderful transformations through which animals pass, shew that it is possible to undergo them without the destruction of the living principle.

But it is to the circumstances in which mankind are placed, viewed in connexion with the moral government of God, that I would now direct my attention, as suggesting considerations which unavoidably lead us to expect a future state of being. The slightest survey of these circumstances will convince us of the impossibility of governing the world without a belief in the reality of such a state. Without it the best code of laws would be unavailing; and so necessary is its operation to the order and existence of society, that all legislators, ancient and modern, have wisely availed themselves of it as an useful and indispensable auxiliary. Knowing that no human sanction has equal efficacy with that which is divine, and that the fear and hope of things obscurely apprehended, and hid in futurity, take a strong hold on the heart and imagination of man, they have made the fundamental principles of religion subservient to the authority of their laws, and the observance of their institutions.

It was reserved for modern times to make a great and memorable experiment on the practicability of governing mankind without any reference to religion, to God, and to eternity. But the ephemeral transactions of that period of guilt and crime have passed away, and have furnished in their history what may admonish future generations of the inutility of laws unsupported by the principles of religious belief. If, indeed, all the suggestions of conscience, enlightened by a knowledge of the divine will, and acting under

the belief of a judgment to come, be often so inefficient in restraining from vice, and in stimulating to virtue, what would be the condition of society if every such restraint were removed, and men were to look to the present life alone for their rewards and punishments? The obvious inference from this fact is, that if the belief of a future state be so necessary to the order of society, and the moral improvement of mankind—this necessity is evidence in favour of its reality. The God of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, who is the supreme Lord and Ruler of all things, would not render a belief in a future existence necessary to society, unless the object of this belief were to be realized. The supposition that the God of truth would govern the world by a delusion is repugnant to every notion we can entertain of his veracity and perfection, and derogatory to the glories of his character.

Besides, a future state of being seems to be necessary to the display and vindication of divine justice. The equity of God will lead him, we are assured, to proportion with perfect exactness the happiness or the misery of his creatures to the degree of virtue or of vice which prevails in their character. But no such unvarying and complete distribution of happiness and misery takes place in the present state; for virtuous men are often exposed to the greatest distresses, while the wicked sometimes live and die in prosperity. It is no sufficient counterbalance to this inequality, that the secret satisfaction accompanying the exercise of virtue, renders a good man happier in his most calamitous state, than it is possible for the

wicked to be in his greatest prosperity ; and that without any future reward, the pleasure of an approving conscience in any situation, is not only a compensation adequate to human virtue, but far more enviable than the highest earthly gratification.

This is no sufficient counterbalance to the unequal allotments of Providence, because the support and comfort of the pious in their afflictions chiefly arise from the expectation of a future state ; and since this expectation is their greatest encouragement to maintain their integrity under every trial, we cannot suppose that a God of infinite wisdom, justice, and goodness, should so order it, that a principal foundation of virtue should be groundless. There are, moreover, sufferings so extreme which the pious are occasionally called to endure, but which they are enabled to bear with fortitude and resignation, from the lively views which they entertain of the happiness of that eternal state from which death and sorrow shall be excluded. Would it not reflect on the justice, faithfulness, and other perfections of God, if no such state were ever to arrive,—and we were then forced to believe that the Deity places his rational and virtuous offspring in situations in which no doctrines of religion could afford consolation, if the whole truth were known ?

Good men, besides, in seasons of calm reflection, often have their tranquillity interrupted by perplexing doubts and fears as to their conformity to the will of God. Their disquieting apprehensions on this head are generally in proportion to the refinement and delicacy of their moral feelings and perceptions. Can

we suppose that God would leave their minds under such distresses, if the present pleasure of virtue were its sole reward. On the supposition that there were nothing beyond death, the man who has lost all shame and remorse in the perpetration of the greatest crimes, has a much larger share of ease of mind than the man of virtue, who is often disquieted by the infirmities incident to humanity, and by the consciousness of falling short of the high standard to which he aspires.

These considerations lead us to believe that God will at some future period interpose for the vindication of the honour of his government ; and that every act of self-denying virtue performed from a regard to his authority, and of wilful guilt committed in rebellion against him, shall receive its due award. They shew what are the verdicts of common sense concerning the equity of a judgment to come ; and while they place this judgment in our view, entire confidence in the goodness and righteousness of God will readily suggest to our minds that there are the best reasons for the inequalities of the present state. It is not to be wondered at, as has been remarked, that God should not here pour down golden showers on the heads of the righteous, nor send fire from heaven, as angry men would have him, upon every provocation, to consume sinners. This life is not a time of reaping, but of sowing ; not of judicial approbation, but of trial ; not of triumph, but of combat ; not of enjoyment, but of work ; not of settlement, but of travail ; in which no man should expect more of encouragement than is needful to support him in his way ; should look to re-

ceive wages before his task is done: to get the prize before he has gone through the race; or to enjoy rest before he is at his journey's end.

A reflection on the wisdom of God would lead us to the same conclusion respecting a future state to which we arrived by the consideration of his justice. We should find it utterly irreconcilable with infinite wisdom to suppose that the soul of man, after attaining, as it frequently happens, to no inconsiderable degree of cultivation, should, in the full maturity of faculties, capable of indefinite improvement, cease to exist. The fond desire, the longing after immortality, is, like the belief in the existence of the Divinity, universal, and ought to be regarded as the voice of the Deity concurring with the numerous attestations of the high destination of our race, and directing our views to that eternity of which he has constituted us the heirs. This desire, united to the faculties and endowments of man, viewed in connexion with the circumstances in which he is now placed, and the higher and the enduring state for which he seems designed, warrants the belief that there awaits him a future and an endless state of being.

This is the state to which the fears of the wicked, as well as the hopes of the righteous, refer; leading alike our thoughts forward to that final day in which God will judge the world in righteousness, and in which he will impartially and perfectly render to every man according to his works: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unright-

teousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil.

Such are the conclusions to which we are led by the light of nature. The conviction of an immortality, of a state in which the rudiments of a supreme system of moral government, observable in this life, will be perfected, is forced on our mind by reflecting on our own intellectual and moral constitution, on our capacities and endowments, as formed in the image of God, for his worship and his glory :—and it is forced on us also by all that we know of the attributes of God, viewed in connexion with the circumstances in which we are placed. But notwithstanding the strength of the evidence by which our belief in a future state is supported, how greatly are we indebted to that day-spring from on high which hath visited us, to give light to them that sat in darkness, and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the ways of peace. Without this light, mankind had numerous intimations from reason and from nature of the reality of an eternal existence beyond the grave. The wisest and the best of the philosophers of Rome has told us that he believed the soul to have her native seat in heaven ; and that it is with reluctance she is forced down from those celestial mansions into these lower regions where all is foreign to her divine nature. This opinion, as he tells us, he was led to embrace, not only as agreeable to the deductions of reason, but in just deference to the authority of the noblest and most distinguished philosophers. “ I am further convinced,” says he, “ in my belief of the soul’s immortality, by the discourse which Socrates, whom the oracle of Apollo

previously encompassed. There is in a single sentence which he has uttered, while it takes for granted the existence of evil in all its extent and magnitude, stronger proofs of the goodness of God, and ground for greater wonder and admiration, than the starting of the universe from nothing into being, fresh with beauty from the hand of its Creator. "God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him, should not perish, but have everlasting life."

CHAPTER IV. ✓

THE DISTINCTIONS OF RIGHT AND WRONG IMMUTABLE AND ETERNAL.

IN forming man after his own image, in righteousness and true holiness, God has rendered him capable of approving of certain actions as right, and of other actions as wrong. From the constitution of our nature, we cannot but mark a difference between virtue and vice, and approve of the one as morally good, and disapprove of the other as morally evil.

Are those distinctions of right and wrong, of virtue and vice, which are thus observed and felt by the human mind, founded in the nature of things, and consequently immutable and eternal,—in other words, are they included in necessary truth, which is as independent of my constitution, as the equality of the three angles of a triangle to two right angles? This

question is answered in the negative by many sceptical writers, who allege that the distinctions of virtue and vice are mere perceptions or emotions of the mind, and have no existence separate from it. There are also some authors, professedly friendly to the interests of religion, who deny the immutability of moral distinctions, and maintain that they have their sole origin in the enactments of will and power.

Of this description is Archdeacon Paley, who has followed some writers that preceded him in their most dangerous statements, and has deduced from these statements their most exceptionable consequences. Such principles as the following are at the foundation of his system of morals. Whatever is expedient is right. It is the utility of any moral rule alone which constitutes the obligation of it. Actions are to be estimated by their tendency. To be obliged to do an action, according to his view, is to be urged to it by a violent motive, resulting from the command of another. This motive, he tells us, can only be self-love,—as we are under no obligation to do any thing which does not contribute to our interest; so that, on the supposition of there being no future state, an action by which we could get nothing would be perfectly indifferent to us. What makes the difference according to him between prudence and duty is, that in the one case we consider what we shall get or lose in this world, and, in the other, what we shall get or lose in the next. A man, therefore, who either does not believe in a future world, or who does not carry his views to it, can have no perception of duty.

We cannot be surprised that an author who held

principles so exceptionable as these, should, at the same time, hold notions subversive of the moral obligation of some most important religious duties, and directly calculated to overturn all public securities depending on tests and subscriptions. His moral philosophy has contributed much to the prevalence of a loose and unscriptural morality. It has led men to disregard the law of God as the only measure and rule of morals, and to substitute, in room of it, their own views of expediency.

Are the distinctions of right and wrong necessary, immutable, and founded in the nature of things?

I regard this question as fundamentally important in relation to the interests of morality and religion. In expressing my conviction of the truth of the affirmative, I am bound to believe that some of those who hold opposite opinions abhor the consequences which, I think, are fairly deducible from them.

In affirming that moral distinctions have a real existence independent of my perception,—an existence immutable and eternal, to which law owes its force and authority, I conceive I am maintaining, and not derogating from, the glories of the Deity. For he is as necessarily holy and good as he necessarily exists. His infinite goodness and rectitude form his moral attributes, and are as essential and unchangeable as his being. His power, therefore, though omnipotent, is bounded in its exercise by his holiness, justice, goodness, and truth: hence, he cannot do what is at variance with these perfections: he cannot lie,—he cannot deceive,—he cannot fail in his promises. From the necessary perfection of his nature,

he cannot compromise a single iota of the claims of the high honours of the Godhead.

By the will of this great and glorious being must be understood, not any thing arbitrary, but the act of a mind possessing infinite intelligence as well as power, infinite rectitude as well as goodness. His will does not create moral distinctions, but is the expression of distinctions which eternally and unchangeably exist; and which are founded in his own nature. The boundless perfection of his nature is not the effect of his will, but his will is the effect, and when revealed, the announcement of his supreme and necessary moral excellency.

This is the view which is everywhere given of God in scripture. His name (an expression well known as denoting his nature) is there represented as excellent in all the earth. He is said to be glorious in holiness—excellent in working—to be righteous and to love righteousness,—to be a God of truth and without iniquity,—to exercise judgment and righteousness in the earth; and to delight in these things. The same passage that makes known his almighty power, declares the moral excellences of his nature, and the perfection of his government. “Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand. Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.” Hence the chief ground on which it is our duty to love the Lord God with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the mind, and with all the strength.

To suppose, then, that the will of God is the sole origin of the distinctions of right and wrong, shews

that the framers of such a supposition have erroneous views of the necessary and eternal moral excellences of the divine nature. If such distinctions were erected and depended on mere power and enactment, would it not follow as a consequence, that all which we approve of as virtue, uncontrollable power might present to our view as vice,—that we might be commanded to love and imitate the conduct of a malevolent friend, and to hate and shun the example of angelic virtue,—and that had God so willed it, what we regard as the differences between moral actions would have been entirely reversed, and good would be put for evil, and evil for good, darkness for light, and light for darkness, bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. According to this scheme there is no justice, no truth, no benevolence, essentially, in God or in the universe; and the attempt of ascertaining what are the moral attributes of the Deity is rendered unnecessary, since whatever he is, has been determined by an act of his will.

How contrary this is to scripture and to enlightened reason, it is needless for me to say. That revelation which God has given of himself represents him as possessing unchanging and boundless excellency, as of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and as righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. It is because the moral excellences of his nature are infinite, that it is the duty of every intelligent creature, antecedent to all law and to all enactment, to love him supremely; and it is on the same ground that his will must ever be the expression of what is holy, and just, and good. He is, indeed, as has been remarked, so absolute, that he can do

[illegible]

I wish to say to you that I am very glad to hear of your success in your studies. I hope you will continue to work hard and achieve even greater things. I am proud of you and your accomplishments.

We are formed capable of perceiving and of feeling moral truth ; but it is truth which has an existence independently of our perceptions and feelings. Every theory, therefore, which represents moral distinctions as having no existence apart from the mind that perceives them :—that is, that teaches us to regard morality as altogether a matter of sensation or feeling, appears to me to have a sceptical and dangerous tendency.

Nor can I admit that the theory of the acute and learned Dr. Brown on this subject, however much guarded by its author, is free from this objection. While he discards the doctrine of moral sense, he contends for the doctrine of moral emotions ;—that is, he reduces all our moral perceptions into *feelings* ;—a doctrine which appears to me to be nearly the same as that which he rejects, and to have precisely the same tendency. His reasoning in support of moral distinctions is, indeed, very powerful, accompanied as it is with the eloquence of a virtuous and generous heart ; and the words in which it is concluded shew the concern which he felt that those whom he instructed should, on this most important topic, receive the truth only. “ We have now,” says he, “ examined very fully the great question, as to the distinctions which we find man everywhere to have made of actions, as morally right or wrong ; and I trust, for the sake of your happiness in life, at least, as much as for the accuracy of your philosophy, that you are not inclined to withhold your logical assent from the doctrine of the moral distinction of vice and virtue,—a

doctrine which seems to me to have every character of truth, as a faithful picture of the phenomena of the mind; and which it would, therefore, be as *erroneous*, as it would be *miserable*, to deny *."

My objection, then, to Dr. Brown's theory is, that it appears to me, not as subversive of morality, to use his own words in reference to a different theory, but as fixing morality on a basis that is not sufficiently firm; with the discovery of the instability of which, therefore, the virtues that are represented as supported on it, might be considered as themselves unstable; as the statue, though it be the image of a god, or the column, though it be a post of the sacred temple, may fall, not because it is not sufficiently cohesive and firm in itself, but because it is too massy for the feeble pedestal on which it has been placed.

Moral truth is perceived and judged of by the understanding, as well as felt and loved by the heart. The distinctions which relate to it are fixed, immutable, and eternal, independently of any perceptions and feelings, and are as much included in necessary truth, as that three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. That a being endowed with certain powers is bound to love and obey the Creator and Preserver of all, is truth, whether I perceive it or no; and we cannot conceive it possible that it can ever be reversed.

* Brown's Lectures on Moral Philosophy, Vol. IV. p. 18.

CHAPTER V.

OF THE MEASURE, OR RULE OF VIRTUE.

By the will of God, we understand the determination or the pleasure of Him who is holy, and just, and good, and whose determinations and enactments, therefore, are founded in justice and in judgment. Few will deny that his will is the measure or rule of obligation to all intelligent and accountable creatures. While this is manifested to us in various ways, it is comprehensively and definitely expressed in that perfect law which he has given us, as the measure of virtue and the rule of conduct.

Before proceeding to point out the perfection of this law, arising from its intrinsic excellency, and the universality of its application, and to prove that it is the only infallible rule to man, I shall make a few observations on the doctrine of expediency, which, according to some, furnishes the rule and the standard of moral conduct.

According to this doctrine, the sole measure of the right or the wrong of every action, is utility, while, at the same time, the agent is the sole judge of that utility. In modern times it has been maintained, if not first, at least, with the greatest ability, by Mr. Hume, and afterwards by Dr. Paley. It is but just, however, to remark, that while they are agreed as to the principle, they greatly differ as to the source from whence it is derived, and the grounds on which its

obligations are maintained:—the latter, considering the rule as proceeding from the will of God, and enforced by the prospect of rewards and punishments in the life to come: while the former views it merely as suggested by nature, and as being enforced only by the present consequences of adopting or disregarding it.

The method by which Dr. Paley attempts to derive his rule of moral obligation from the will of God, is extremely plausible, and of a nature well adapted to procure for it a favourable reception with pious minds. “God Almighty,” says he, “wills and wishes the happiness of his creatures: and, consequently, those actions which promote that will and wish must be agreeable to him; and the contrary:—the method of coming at the will of God concerning any action by the light of nature is, to inquire into the tendency of that action to promote or diminish the general happiness:—But who shall judge of the expediency? Every man for himself. The danger of error and abuse is no objection to the rule of expediency, because every other rule is liable to the same or greater; and every rule that can be propounded on the subject, must, in the application, depend on private judgment.” He even affirms, that every moral rule is, on the ground of expediency, in particular cases, liable to be dispensed with: so that on such occasions it may be as great a duty to supersede the rule, as it is on others to observe it. “Moral Philosophy,” continues he, “cannot pronounce that any rule of morality is so rigid as to bend to no exceptions; nor, on the other hand, can she comprise these exceptions within any

previous description. She confesses that the obligation of every law depends upon its ultimate utility; that this utility having a finite and determinate value, situations may be feigned, and consequently may possibly arise, in which the general tendency is outweighed by the enormity of the particular mischief."

Mr. Hume, the most distinguished advocate of the doctrine of expediency in modern times, and from whom Mr. Paley derived it, expresses himself in regard to it in the following terms, in his *Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*. "Are not justice, fidelity, honour, veracity, allegiance, chastity, esteemed solely on account of their tendency to promote the good of society? Can it possibly be doubted, that industry, discretion, frugality, secrecy, order, perseverance, forethought, judgment, and that whole class of virtues, of which many pages could not contain the catalogue; can it be doubted, I say, that the tendency of these virtues to promote the interest and happiness of their possessor, is the sole foundation of their merit?—I cannot be more assured of any truth, which I learn from reason and argument, than that virtue consists altogether in the usefulness or agreeableness of qualities to the person himself possessed of them, or to others, who have any intercourse with him*."

The doctrine of expediency is quite as objectionable in the hands of Dr. Paley as it was in those of Mr. Hume. While there is an avowed deference to the will of God and to the authority of scripture, there is a real departure from both; and views of utility, of

* *Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*. Ed. 1751, p. 185, 186.

which utility man alone is to be the judge, are substituted in room of the clear, determinate, and unalterable law of God. I shall now shortly attempt to prove, that the principle of expediency, as furnishing the rule of moral conduct to man, is utterly false and untenable,—from a consideration of the moral perfections and government of God,—from the moral constitution of man,—from the numerous evils of which its adoption would necessarily be productive,—from its opposition to divine revelation:—and from the incapability of man to discern all the consequences of his actions.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRINCIPLE OF EXPEDIENCY PROVED TO BE FALSE AND UNTENABLE, FROM A CONSIDERATION OF THE MORAL CHARACTER AND GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

THAT in creating the world, and in conducting his government in regard to it, the object of the Deity is the good or happiness of the universe, is a position in which all, according to this general statement of it, will readily acquiesce. It is highly probable, however, from the deductions of reason, and it is fully established by Scripture, that in connexion with this object he had in view his own glory, or the illustrious manifestation of the fulness of the divine nature. Not only is it affirmed in the sacred writings, that this is the ultimate end for which the world was created, but it is declared that all the dispensations by which he conducts his government in regard to it, are made

subservient to this. The great event to which our attention is there so constantly directed, the redemption of the world through our Lord Jesus Christ, is intended, as we are repeatedly told, for the furtherance of this object. “ God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name ; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth ; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, *to the glory of God the Father.*”

In promoting the good of that universe to which he has given being, and over which he reigns, he promotes it in connexion with the manifestation of the moral excellencies of his nature. These consist, not merely of benevolence, but of the purest rectitude ; and we are taught, by revelation, and by the established order of providence, that neither of these perfections can be exercised in a way which would compromise the honour of the other. While we are assured that his tender mercies are over all his works ; we are informed by the same divine authority, that “ the Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.” His object, therefore, cannot be the happiness of the creatures that he has formed in his own image, apart from their moral improvement. He designs their happiness, but it is in connexion with their moral excellency, and the glories of his righteousness as well as of his goodness.

We cannot, indeed, conceive, that a being of infinite purity and rectitude, who is the supreme Ruler of his accountable creatures, as well as their Creator, would make their happiness, in whatever way they might

choose to enjoy it, the object of his care, without regard to the justice and judgment by which his government is conducted. As the Judge of all he must do right, though his doing so involves in it the punishment, and consequently the misery of transgressors. We approve his procedure in such a case as in itself right, without at all thinking of the useful consequences that may result from it. "We have an immediate approbation of making the virtuous happy, and discouraging the vicious, abstracted from all consequences. Were there but two beings in the universe, one of whom was virtuous, the other vicious; or, were we to conceive two such beings, in other respects alike, governed apart from the rest of the world, and removed for ever from the notice of all other creatures; we should still approve of a different treatment of them: that the good being should be less happy, or a greater sufferer, than his evil fellow-being, would appear to us wrong*."

While the Deity seeks the happiness of the universe, it is in subordination to the manifestation of the moral glories of his nature, and in connexion with the improvement of his creatures in virtue. The exercise of his justice, not less than of his goodness, is implied in his government of intelligent and accountable creatures. He could neither be a being of infinite perfection, nor a righteous moral governor, unless, possessing boundless rectitude, he shewed it in his treatment of his subjects; but mankind, under the conviction that he is a perfect being, and a righteous governor and judge, confidently rely on the equity, as well as on the benevolence, of his procedure, and when suffer-

* Price's Review, &c. p. 27.

ing from the injustice and oppression of their fellows, look for an ample adjustment at the tribunal of the eternal Judge.

He wills and wishes the happiness of his creatures, doubtless, but it is in accordance with the glorious ends to which I have alluded. All that we know of his moral government in this world confirms the truth of this position. There are evils innumerable connected with the present state, which man cannot by any efforts escape, and which the God of infinite goodness allows to impair the happiness of his creatures. Were it true that he wills and wishes the happiness of mankind apart from all other ends, who will affirm that his will and his wishes are accomplished here; "Man that is born of a woman is of few days and full of trouble." The inlets to sorrow are almost as numerous as the sources of enjoyment. Is it maintained, that the ultimate design of the Deity in these evils is the happiness of his creatures? Be it so: two things are clear from the fact,—that their moral improvement is aimed at, and is, in a great measure, to constitute their happiness,—and that though we admit that utility be the rule by which the Deity conducts his government, it is a rule which is utterly unsuited to man. How can he, with his limited faculties, and with his comparative ignorance of the nature and qualities of beings, and the tendency of actions, be capable of making expediency the law of his conduct? It is only for Him who sees the end from the beginning, to know all the consequences of a single action, and to determine the way in which the good of that universe which he has formed shall be secured.

“ When Saint Paul’s cathedral was erected, the architect willed and wished the excellence of the edifice. Therefore the method which it was right for the workmen individually to pursue, if they were at any time without specific instructions, in order to ascertain his will respecting any proceeding, was, to inquire into the tendency of that proceeding to promote or diminish the excellence of the structure. If one of the masons had reasoned in this manner, and, in conformity to his rule, had commenced, at his own discretion, an arch in one place, and formed the rudiments of a dome in another ; would his arguments have been acquitted of presumption, and accepted by the architect as a defence of his conduct ? Would he have been allowed to be capable of ascertaining the will of Sir Christopher Wren from his own crude ideas of architectural expediency *.”

But as Dr. Paley maintains that utility is the rule of moral conduct, and the sole ground of obligation ; not only in those cases in which revelation is silent, but in which it gives the most positive commands, it is necessary, in order to shew, how untenable and inconclusive his argument is, to suppose that the mason has not only commenced an arch and projected a dome without instructions, but has done this *contrary* to his instructions ; that he vindicates his conduct by a repetition of his former defence, and justifies himself in the words, *mutatis mutandis*, in which Dr. Paley pursues his reasoning at the commencement of his chapter on UTILITY. “ My proceedings are to be estimated by their tendency. Whatever is expedient

* Gisborne’s Principles of Moral Philosophy, p. 20.

in right. It is the utility *alone* of any one of your orders which constitutes the obligation of it. Every man is to judge of them for himself. Consequently your directions respecting the arch and the dome, appearing to me inexpedient, I was at liberty, and even obliged in conscience, to disobey them."

CHAPTER VII.

THE PRINCIPLE OF EXPEDIENCY PROVED TO BE FALSE, FROM
A CONSIDERATION OF THE MORAL CONSTITUTION OF MAN.

It is not enough that we shew the incapability of man, arising from his very limited faculties, and his comparative ignorance, to make utility the sole rule of his conduct. We shall find, that by recalling to our recollection what has been already noticed concerning his moral powers and principles, we shall be led to the same conclusion.

We are so formed that we approve or disapprove of actions as right or as wrong, as praiseworthy or blameworthy, before a thought has entered our mind as to their tendency. The deed of heroism which calls forth our approval before we have time to reflect on the ground on which our approbation is bestowed, and the act of self-devotion by which the martyr to pure religion does homage to his God and his conscience, immediately commend themselves to our hearts. Who has ever withheld his admiration from Leonidas and his chosen band, till he has thought of the good which their example in all coming ages was to confer

on the world? Who has hesitated to approve of the child that has diminished her own comforts, and impaired her health, in ministering to a sickly parent,—who has been able to deny his approbation in contemplating such virtue, till he had calculated the advantages that were to arise from it?

Before the truth of the theory of utility can be proved, the moral constitution of man must be altered. That theory, however modified, and however disguised, goes to establish, that the whole of morality is a system of unmingled selfishness,—an affair of either profit or loss to ourselves or to others. In this form, accordingly, it is avowed by Mandeville, who maintains that man is concerned for his own personal gratifications, and cares not for the happiness or misery of others,—and that in the sacrifices which he makes to promote this happiness, he is only in pursuit of self-gratification. It is the same system of selfishness, though its greater plausibility has procured for it a reception with persons of undoubted piety and purity, which Dr. Paley has presented to the world in his *Moral Philosophy*; in which he maintains that the sole obligation to virtue consists in an exclusive regard to our own individual eternity of happiness; and that virtue itself consists in obedience to the will of the Supreme Being,—which obedience is to be given, not on account of the infinite moral excellencies and perfections of his nature, nor because of his creating and preserving goodness, but merely on account of his power to give or withhold the happiness which is our object.

Of this system, it has been well remarked, that, " while the selfishness which it maintains is as absolute and unremitting, as if the objects of personal gain were to be found in the wealth, or honours, or sensual pleasures of this earth ; this very selfishness is rendered more offensive, by the noble image of the Deity which is continually presented to our mind, and presented in all his benevolence, not to be loved, but to be courted with a mockery of affection. The sensualist of the common system of selfishness, who never thinks of any higher object in the pursuit of the little pleasures which he is miserable enough to regard as happiness, is a being, even in the brutal stupidity in which he is sunk, more worthy of esteem than the selfish of another life ; to whose view God is ever present, but who views him always only to feel constantly in their heart, that in loving him who has been the dispenser of all the blessings which they have enjoyed, and who has revealed himself in the glorious character of the diffuser of an immortality of happiness, they love not the giver himself, but only the gifts which they have received, or the gifts that are promised*."

That there is a close connexion between virtue and happiness, so close that without it the universe would become a splendid mansion of misery, is not to be doubted ; and it is chiefly because this connexion is felt and observed by all, that certain writers have been led to maintain, that virtue solely consists in utility, or in its tendency to happiness, and that the

* Brown's Lectures, Vol. IV., p. 99.

law by which we are to regulate our conduct, is to be found in what appears to us to be conducive to happiness. They have been led to embrace this opinion with the greater confidence, that they have observed how much its truth holds in regard to men invested with public offices, and public trust. Men in such circumstances are, doubtless, bound to act for the good of the community. But they are bound so to act, because it is their duty to love their neighbours as themselves, to respect the rights of others as they do their own, and, consequently, to promote their happiness to the extent of their power and opportunity.

We approve or disapprove of actions, however, not because of their tendency to happiness, or the contrary, but in consequence of the moral constitution of our nature; which constitution, as God is its author, we are to regard as furnishing an expression of his will. ∴ How few of mankind ever think, or have ever thought, of the relation between virtue and happiness. Do we not give our admiration to the virtuous patriot, to the benefactors of our race, who have loved their race more than their own ease or lives, before we have considered the good which they were instrumental in conferring? Would not the noble career of Howard procure for him a place in the *grateful* affections of every human heart, irrespectively of the consequences which are to flow from it, and before these consequences had been placed in the view of the mind? He who has formed us in his own image has not rendered it necessary for us to observe relations, and to estimate tendencies and effects,

previously to our approving of an action as right, or of disapproving of it as wrong: and being conscious that we love virtue and hate vice without reference to consequences, merely because they are virtue and vice, we justly infer, that it is not on account of their consequences that virtue is lovely and vice hateful, that the one produces the emotion of approbation and the other of disapprobation.

This much the patrons of the doctrine of expediency do virtually acknowledge, when they admit, as all must, that there is a material difference between the views and feelings with which we contemplate a steam-engine and the virtuous actions of a moral agent. A steam-engine is useful, and so is a virtuous living agent; but the admiration which we bestow on the one is of a nature far different from the love we give to the other,—a circumstance which Hume and his followers admitted, and in the admission have virtually granted the fallacy of the principle on which their system rests. Even according to their own concession, utility is not the sole measure and rule of virtue. If the qualifications requisite to constitute a moral agent are necessary to give to his *useful* actions the qualities which awaken our feelings of right and wrong, of good desert and ill desert, of course, it is these qualities, and not utility, that make virtue the object of our moral love and approbation.

The doctrine of Paley, therefore, which represents the sole motive to virtue to be the happiness of the agent himself, is necessarily false. So far is this from the truth, that we find by appealing to our consciences, that moral agents rise in our estimation

just in proportion as they keep themselves out of sight in the good actions they perform. The man who does good without ever thinking of the advantages which he individually is to derive from it, we regard as, in every respect, more deserving of our love and approbation, than he who does good from selfish considerations. Benevolence is pure only as it is disinterested; and it is only as it is pure that it claims our gratitude or admiration.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRINCIPLE OF EXPEDIENCY PROVED TO BE FALSE, BY A CONSIDERATION OF THE EVILS OF WHICH ITS ADOPTION WOULD NECESSARILY BE PRODUCTIVE.

THE abuse of a principle is certainly no valid objection to its legitimate use; but when it can be shown that it has a natural and direct tendency to produce evils, and that it has been urged in all ages by the oppressors and scourgers of mankind in vindication of their atrocities, we are surely required to reject it as furnishing a rule of moral conduct.

If expediency be the only rule of action, and if every man is to judge for himself, concerning the utility of his own conduct, may not the perjurer, the betrayer of the interests of his country, the fanatic, and the assassin, be persuaded, each in his own mind, that his actions are, in their consequences, beneficial, and entitled to reward? This much is admitted by the great advocate of expediency, Mr. Hume: "According to the imperfect way, in which human affairs are con-

ducted, a sensible knave, in particular incidents, may think that an act of iniquity or infidelity will make a considerable addition to his fortune, without causing any considerable breach in the social union and confederacy. That *honesty is the best policy*, may be a good general rule; but it is liable to many exceptions: and he, it may perhaps be judged, conducts himself with most wisdom, who observes the general rule, and takes advantage of all the exceptions*."

This, it is candidly acknowledged, is the use to which the principle of utility may be applied by a *sensible knave*. To prevent this natural application of it, when adopted as a rule of conduct, we can only say in the words of Mr. Hume, "If his heart does not rebel against such pernicious maxims, if he feels no reluctance to the thoughts of villany and baseness, he has indeed lost a considerable motive to virtue; and we may expect, that his practice will be answerable to his speculation!" If, however, his heart does not rebel against such pernicious maxims, but if, on the contrary, he persuades himself that their utility in regard to him, at least, proves that they are not pernicious, on what ground, according to the principles of expediency, can he be condemned, for making his practice agree with his speculation?

If we suppose this rule to be adopted by men possessed of sovereign power, whose decisions affect the happiness and the destiny of nations, would it not prove most favourable to the establishment of that system of policy, however pernicious, to which they inclined? We can easily perceive that a virtuous

* Inquiry concerning Morals, p. 198.

ruler, misled by this principle, would prosecute plans, and from the purest intentions, most detrimental to the good of the governed. Without principle, but endowed with talents, and influenced by ambition, a prince would find, in the rule of expediency, every thing suited to his views. It would accommodate itself to every variation in his conduct and government. Would it not supply him with a reason to vindicate every act of injustice, and a plausible pretext for every stretch of power? How soon might he be persuaded of the utility of destroying civil and religious liberty, and convinced of the *utility* of such a measure; and having power to effect it, why should he not thus exercise it? The most relentless persecution, on this principle, would appear to its author as an act of duty.

Expediency has been alleged in justification of the greatest inhumanity and injustice. It has been acted upon by persecutors and tyrants in every age of the world. It has been the rule of conduct to all who have found a courtly morality convenient. The Inquisition referred to it for its vindication in the cruelties which it inflicted, and in the fires which it kindled. That society which is most dangerous to the stability of thrones, and to the virtue and happiness of mankind,—the Jesuits,—have made this the foundation of their pernicious maxims, their intriguing counsels, and unchristian compliances. Its general adoption “would be,” to use the words of Mr. Paley, “to commit every man’s life and safety to the spleen, fury, and fanaticism of his neighbour; a disposition of affairs which would soon fill the world with misery

and confusion ; and, ere long, put an end to human society, if not to the human species."

The adoption of this principle in private life—and it is adopted in too many instances—would be productive of the greatest vice and misery. It is not too much to affirm, that no one will steadfastly, and in opposition to his *apparent* interest, love the things that are true, and honest, and just, in all their bearings on human life, unless the principles of religion be so firmly fixed in his mind, as to operate like active stimulants, impelling to the practice of duty. It is not enough that he is aware of the utility of integrity and honesty to society ; for though he daily feels the necessity of these virtues in the character of others, occasions will occur, when the desire of some present advantage will induce him to make an exception in his own case, and when no ideas of expediency will have sufficient force to counteract the influence of temptation.

In the progress of life, how numerous are the instances in which the present advantage of a virtuous action may be very doubtful ; and in which obvious loss accompanies the onward road of rectitude and truth. In such cases, will it infallibly preserve us from deviating from the path of duty, to know that honesty, on the whole, is more useful to society than fraud ? Or, that if it be allowable in us, for private ends, to do wrong, there can be no reason shewn why the same advantage ought not be given to every member of the community. If even that divine religion which begins its operation on the heart, and which

brings down holy and powerful influence to our aid—a religion which is invested with the terrors, no less than with the milder glories, of the Lord—and which possesses every principle that can win or awe the human mind;—if such a religion be not always effectual in delivering its disciples from temptation, how inefficient must the doctrine of utility prove as a rule of moral obligation, and as a motive to its practice!

CHAPTER IX.

THE PRINCIPLE OF EXPEDIENCY PROVED TO BE FALSE FROM ITS OPPOSITION TO DIVINE REVELATION.

THE existence of such a Revelation presupposes its necessity in furnishing mankind with a rule of conduct, as well as a guide of faith, and a ground of hope. But if it was necessary that God should prescribe a law to his creatures, by which they should regulate their moral feelings and actions, it follows, that this law alone must be the test and criterion of duty, to the exclusion of every principle which man may be disposed to substitute in its room.

This conviction is strengthened, when we observe the manner in which God requires us to observe his law. Is there, in that Sacred Volume, in which alone his will on this subject is made known, any statement from which it might be inferred, that man may assume, in a single instance, the liberty of dispensing with the explicit and eternal statutes of Heaven? How often,

on the contrary, are mankind cautioned against the assumption of such a power, as a dishonour to the Supreme Legislator of the universe, and fraught with mischief and ruin to those who practise it! They are commanded to make their minds familiar with it, to meditate in it day and night—in consideration of its divine original, and because it is a full and infallible standard of duty. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in the house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates *.”

Even the duties of benevolence, the limits of which cannot be so precisely defined as those of justice, and of the manner of discharging which we are, therefore, left in some measure to judge, are enforced, and are to be performed, without the aid of the principle of expediency. The Scriptures teach us to govern our determination, in such cases, by other considerations—by a sense of duty, by the fear and love of God, by a supreme regard to his glory, and by the conviction of our accountableness. In all cases, the language which they speak, and the principles which they enjoin, are in direct opposition to Mr. Paley’s opinion, “that there is no command in Holy Writ, however plainly ex-

* Deut, vi. 5—9.

pressed, however forcibly inculcated, which a man is not permitted, which he is not bound, to violate whenever his blindness, his interest, his frenzy, induce him to imagine that the violation will ultimately be productive of advantage."

But it is not enough to state, generally, that the principle of expediency is opposed to Scripture; it is there marked with unqualified reprobation. "We be slanderously reported, and some affirm that we say,—Let us do evil that good may come; whose damnation," adds the Apostle, "is just*." Mr. Paley's comment on these words of inspiration may well excite astonishment; and convince the reader of the dangerous tendency of a principle, which could lead a man who really venerated Divine Revelation, to write concerning one of its most explicit announcements, in a manner so unguarded. "From the principles delivered in this and the two preceding chapters, a maxim may be explained, which is in every man's mouth, and in most men's without meaning, viz., *not to do evil that good may come*—that is, let us not violate a general rule for the sake of any *particular* good consequences we may expect—which is *for the most part* a salutary caution, the advantage seldom compensating for the violation of the rule*."

It is, besides, no slight objection to the principle in question, that its adoption might lead to the rejection of Christianity. For, if utility be the only infallible criterion of the divine will, does it not follow, that in weighing the evidence for Revelation, the unbeliever, should he be led in the outset to conceive that the re-

* Rom. iii. 8.

† Vol. i. p. 81.

ception of the Gospel would not promote the general happiness of mankind, would feel it to be his duty to reject it? Though he should be convinced that the testimony in support of divine Revelation is irrefragable, still, on his principles, he would be bound to pronounce it an imposture,—having been satisfied by previous investigation that, on the whole, it is unfavourable to the interests of mankind. It is on this ground, accordingly, it has ostensibly been rejected by the majority of philosophical unbelievers. How could Rousseau, for example, notwithstanding his occasional pretensions to the contrary, love or receive that religion respecting which he says, that it “preaches up nothing but slavery and dependence? The spirit of it is too favourable to tyranny for her not always to take the advantage of it. Free Christians are made to be slaves.”

Finally, the principle of expediency is directly opposed to the benevolence which the Gospel requires. The most marked characteristic of this, as will afterwards be shewn, is disinterestedness. The love which is pure, which is acceptable to God, seeketh not her own. The Divine Founder of our religion has commanded us to do good, without any selfish reference to the return which our benevolence may bring us. “If ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the Publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the Publicans so.”

How contrary is this to the doctrine inculcated by the patrons of expediency; who tell us, that we

should so constantly keep in view in our actions the good which they are likely to procure, that we are warranted to break the most express commandments of Heaven, when we think that the advantage is of sufficient magnitude to justify the violation.

CHAPTER X.

THE PRINCIPLE OF EXPEDIENCY NOT COUNTENANCED BY THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF REWARD.

THE most plausible argument in favour of the principle of utility, an argument of which Paley has very fully availed himself, is, its apparent consistency with the doctrine of scripture concerning the reward promised to genuine faith and obedience.

The following are a few out of many passages in which mankind are commanded to seek salvation, and promised eternal life as the reward of their persevering pursuit. “Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality; eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil;—but glory, honour, and peace to every man that worketh good*.” “We labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive

* Rom. ii. 6—10.

the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*.” “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus†.”

The same principle is recognised in those appeals to our love of personal happiness which are so abundant in scripture. “Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul‡?” “Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him§.”

But in what does the principle here recognised and recommended differ from utility? Does not the former as well as the latter require us to seek by strenuous and persevering exertion a personal advantage, a reward of the greatest magnitude? According to the doctrine of expediency, the strength of an obligation to an action or line of conduct is in proportion to the gain which is to accrue from it. “We can be obliged to nothing,” says Paley, “but what we ourselves are to gain or lose something by: for nothing else can be a violent motive to us. As we should not be obliged to obey the laws, or the magistrate, unless rewards or punishments, pleasure or pain, somehow or other, depended upon our obedience; so neither should we,

* 2 Cor. v. 9, 10.

† Philip iii. 14.

‡ Matt. xvi. 26.

§ Luke xii. 4, 5.

without the same reason, be obliged to do what is right, to practise virtue, or to obey the commands of God*."

When it is recollected what the doctrine of expediency really is,—that it resolves the virtue or worth of moral actions into their tendency to procure some benefit to ourselves or others,—that it rests the obligation to obey the commands of God on the gain which obedience brings,—and that it authorizes us to violate the most express laws of God, when we can induce ourselves to think that their violation will bring us greater benefit than their observance; it is surely not necessary to make many observations to prove, that the promise of reward, held forth in the gospel, to persevering faith and obedience, is totally different.

In what does that promised reward consist? In the case supposed, that is, in regard to mankind, it consists in deliverance from sin, and in the everlasting possession of all the happiness of which our nature is capable. To be perfectly virtuous, is to be perfectly meet for the enjoyment of that happiness which virtue ever yields. Is not this a good of incalculable value,—the magnitude of which is to be estimated, not merely by its eternal duration, but by its perpetual accumulation? That it is in itself an object of supreme desire, and that it justly ought to be so, no one can doubt. But in this desire, however intense, when indulged aright, there is nothing selfish, nothing at variance with the disinterested love of God and of man which is the fulfilling of the law:—there is nothing

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without the same reason, be obliged to do what is right, to practise virtue, or to obey the commands of God*."

When it is recollected what the doctrine of expediency really is,—that it resolves the virtue or worth of moral actions into their tendency to procure some benefit to ourselves or others,—that it rests the obligation to obey the commands of God on the gain which obedience brings,—and that it authorizes us to violate the most express laws of God, when we can induce ourselves to think that their violation will bring us greater benefit than their observance; it is surely not necessary to make many observations to prove, that the promise of reward, held forth in the gospel, to persevering faith and obedience, is totally different.

In what does that promised reward consist? In the case supposed, that is, in regard to mankind, it consists in deliverance from sin, and in the everlasting possession of all the happiness of which our nature is capable. To be perfectly virtuous, is to be perfectly meet for the enjoyment of that happiness which virtue ever yields. Is not this a good of incalculable value,—the magnitude of which is to be estimated, not merely by its eternal duration, but by its perpetual accumulation? That it is in itself an object of supreme desire, and that it justly ought to be so, no one is in doubt. But in this desire, however intense, when indulged aright, there is nothing selfish, nothing at variance with the disinterested love of God and of man which is the fulfilling of the law :—there is nothing

60 *The Principle of Utility proved to be Untenable.*

pursue in all things, and above all things. This is to be our ultimate end in every pursuit, even in that of everlasting salvation. In acting thus, we only give to God what he is entitled to receive, the supreme love of the heart.

But how opposite is this to the scheme of utility, which makes our own individual gain to be every thing,—which is so far from representing the glory of God as an object of superlative importance, that it authorizes us to violate his laws when we can persuade ourselves to believe, that we shall derive greater advantage from the violation than from the observance—and which, in place of pointing to God as the first object of disinterested regard, maintains, that he is on no other ground entitled to our love and obedience, than in consideration of the evil which he can inflict, and the good which he can communicate?

CHAPTER XI.

**THE PRINCIPLE OF UTILITY PROVED TO BE UNTENABLE FROM
THE INCAPABILITY OF MAN TO DISCERN THE CONSEQUENCES
OF HIS ACTIONS.**

THAT the consequences which follow from the actions of moral agents are endless, is a proposition, the truth of which few will controvert. Moral evil, no less than moral good, perpetuates itself. The effects of a single good action may reach into eternity. It is only a Being of infinite understanding who can know the number and duration of those results to which one deed of beneficence gives rise. It is he only who can

estimate all the evil of which a single act of impiety and immorality may be productive.

If, to be instrumental in the restoration to virtue and to happiness, of a being destined for immortality, is a measure of good which a single individual may, by his exertions or example, be the means of attaining; an individual also may, by his exertions or example, be the means of producing an extent of moral ruin which the conceptions of man cannot reach. Hence Scripture teaches us that the results of every man's conduct here will meet him in the day of final retribution; and that his eternal condition, either of happiness or of misery, shall be fixed accordingly. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

Nor are these remarks merely applicable to those actions, respecting the morality or immorality of which, it is presumed, there cannot exist a difference of opinion. Actions, which may seem trivial, and the real character of which as to right or wrong may appear doubtful to those who have not divine revelation to guide them, may be productive of important and endless consequences. How desirable, how necessary, is it for moral agents to have an infallible rule of action prescribed to them by Him whose wisdom and knowledge are infinite?

But if we cannot foresee all the consequences of our actions, how can we derive from the principle of expediency the rule to direct our moral conduct? "Is the degree of expediency which we can discern, in any case such as to justify us in inferring that we have a tolerable insight into general expediency? Surely no one will answer in the affir-

mative. As well might an Abyssinian pretend to delineate the whole course of the Nile, in consequence of having traced the windings of the infant river for a few miles contiguous to his hut. As well might a fisherman infer, that his line, which has reached the bottom of the creek in which he exercises his trade, is capable of fathoming the depth of the Atlantic.

“ If this argument wanted confirmation, it might receive it from a view of the moral, to say nothing of the natural, government of the world. Even though we are previously convinced that the great object of the Almighty is the happiness of his creatures, in numerous instances we see very imperfectly how the detail of his operations conduces to the end which he has in view. Sometimes presumptuous ignorance would lead us to imagine that we perceive circumstances which militate against it, as the permission of moral evil ; others, wherein there is an appearance of imperfection, as in the late establishment and partial diffusion of Christianity ; and numbers which seem indifferent to the design proposed, or neither fully nor directly to conduce to it. If, then, we are so far from discovering the propriety and excellence of the parts of a system, which we are certain is framed in exact conformity to the standard of general expediency, we may be convinced how little our utmost sagacity can discover of the ultimate tendency and effects of our conduct ; we may be assured that we are wholly unqualified to determine whether those actions, which seem to further the particular expediency within the reach of our foresight, would or would not conduce to general good ; that the limited knowledge of expe-

diency attainable by the wisest of men is unfit to be adopted as the basis of moral rectitude ; and that if it were adopted, we should very frequently be acting in direct opposition to the will of God, at the time when we had fondly persuaded ourselves that we were most strenuously employed in promoting it*.”

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE DIFFERENT THEORIES OF MORALS.

HAVING shewn the grounds and principles of moral obligation, and having attempted to prove that moral distinctions are immutable and eternal,—I shall conclude this division of my subject with a few observations on the different theories of morals.

The object of all such theories is to account for the origin of our moral sentiments. The earliest formed in modern times is that of Hobbes, an author whose acuteness and genius have seldom been surpassed. A favourite dogma with him, in common with some of the ancients, was, that the notion of the being and providence of God, and of religious worship, is the effect of human fear and weakness. Yet, he elsewhere asserts, that the mechanical contrivance of the human body affords so clear a proof of a wise Maker, that he must be without a mind who does not admit its

* Gisborne's Principles of Moral Philosophy.

having been made by a Being of intelligence *. Our ideas of right and wrong, of justice and injustice, have their origin, according to him, in the institutions of priests and legislators, that is, in the authority of political enactment.

To enter on the refutation of this theory, would only be to repeat what has been already stated. If the observations formerly made are not sufficient to shew that moral distinctions are fixed and unchangeable, I cannot hope to produce conviction of this by any additional illustrations.

Who does not remark the utter impotency of all the legislators of the world in changing one virtue into vice, or, in altering the essential laws of right and wrong? Has the most profligate prince ever presumed to declare that his government patronised deceit, fraud, cruelty, and oppression, and that only the deceitful, the fraudulent, the cruel, and oppressive, were to expect protection and reward? Has the tyrant at the head of his mercenary armies acknowledged that he was influenced solely by unprincipled ambition, and that he led them to the field, not to combat for the liberty and happiness of mankind, but to rivet more firmly the chains of the conquerors and the conquered?

“ There is, indeed, a power,” as has been remarked, “ by which princes decree justice ; but it is a power above the mere voice of kings—a power, which has previously fixed in the breasts of those who receive the decree, a love of the very virtue which kings, even when kings are most virtuous, can only enforce. And it is well for man that the feeble authorities of this

* Hobb, de Homine, l. i. c. 1.

earth cannot change the sentiments of our hearts with the same facility, as they can throw fetters on our hands. There would, then, indeed, be no hope to the oppressed, the greater the oppression, the stronger motive would there be to make obedience to oppression a virtue, and every species of guilt, which the powerful might love to exercise, amiable in the eyes even of the miserable victims. All virtue in such circumstances would soon perish from the earth. Nature has not thrown us on the world with such feeble principles as these: she has given us virtue of which no power can deprive us, and has fixed in the soul of Him whom more than fifty nations obey, a restraint on his power, from which the servile obedience of all the nations of the globe could not absolve him*."

* The fundamental doctrines inculcated in the political writings of Hobbes are contained in the following propositions:—All men are by nature equal; and prior to government, they had all an equal right to enjoy the good things of the world. Man, too, is (according to Hobbes) by nature a solitary and purely selfish animal; the social union being entirely an interested league, suggested by prudential views of personal advantage. The necessary consequence is, that a state of nature must be a state of perpetual warfare, in which no individual has any other means of safety than his own strength or ingenuity; and in which there is no room for regular industry, because no secure enjoyment of its fruits. In confirmation of this view of the origin of society, Hobbes appeals to facts falling daily within the circle of our own experience. "Does not a man, (he asks,) when taking a journey, arm himself, and seek to go well accompanied? When going to sleep, does he not lock his doors. Nay, even in his own house, does he not lock his chests? Does he not *there* as much accuse mankind by his actions, as I do by my words."

For the sake of peace and security, it is necessary that each individual should surrender a part of his natural right, and be contented with such a share of liberty as he is willing to allow to others; or, to use Hobbes's own language, "every man must divest himself of the right he has to all things by nature; the right of all men to all things being in effect no better than if no man had a right to any thing." In consequence of this transference of natural rights to an individual, or to a body of individuals, the multitude become one person, under the name of a state or republic, by which person the common will and power are exercised for the common

Nearly allied to the theory which would resolve all our notions of right and wrong into political enactment as their source, is that of Mandeville, which represents what the world has agreed to call virtue as the mere production of political skill, the sacrifice of one kind of individual gratification for the sake of attaining gratification of another kind, namely, that praise for which it is alleged that the natural appetite of man is insatiable. According to this theory, the exercise of virtue exhibits only the indulgence of human frailty, and the practice of hypocrisy.

That which gives to this, and to all similar theories, any plausibility, is the unquestionable corruption of human nature, which so often exists under the garb of virtue, and which is so apt to mingle itself with all that is praiseworthy in man. But, to admit the truth of Mandeville's doctrines, were to admit that the nature of man is degraded to an extent far beyond what either Scripture or reason authorizes us to believe. This theory is, besides, fundamentally erro-

defence. The ruling power cannot be withdrawn from those to whom it has been committed ; nor can they be punished for misgovernment. The interpretation of the laws is to be sought, not from the comments of philosophers, but from the authority of the ruler ; otherwise society would every moment be in danger of resolving itself into the discordant elements of which it was at first composed. The will of the magistrate, therefore, is to be regarded as the ultimate standard of right and wrong, and his voice to be listened to by every citizen as the voice of conscience.—*Professor Stewart's Dissertation, &c.* p. i. p. 68.

This doctrine, which Hobbes revived, was held, in substance, by several of the ancient philosophers. Plato speaks of some, who maintained "that the things which are accounted just, are not so by nature ; for that men are always differing about them, and making new constitutions : and as often as they are thus constituted, they obtain authority, being made just by art and by the laws, not by any natural force or virtue." (*Plato de Leg.* l. 10.) The same doctrine was held by Aristippus, Pyrrho, and in general by the Sceptics.

neous, inasmuch as it is opposed to the fixed and immutable distinctions of morality: it can only be viewed as a satirical representation of the vices of some of the species: it therefore, neither requires nor merits any further refutation.

The theory of Clarke and of Wollaston (for the theory supported by both these distinguished writers, though somewhat differently expressed, is radically the same) is of an opposite description. It is the system, not only of men of genius, but of men who were lovers of what is virtuous and noble in our common nature. According to them, virtue consists in acting agreeably to the fitness, or to the truth of things.

It is undoubtedly fit, or congruous, that a moral agent should act virtuously, and it is unfit and incongruous, that he should act viciously; but it is also obvious that there is a *fitness* in all that takes place under the natural and moral government of God for producing certain effects. There is in vice an adaptation to produce misery, as there is in virtue to produce happiness, and the fitness in the one case is as great as that in the other.

This theory assumes what its authors design it to account for and explain,—the origin of moral distinctions. To say that virtue consists in acting according to the fitness of things, is only saying, that virtue consists in acting in conformity with virtue,—a position which contains nothing original or new.

The authors of this doctrine, though they have failed in accomplishing that for which their theory was formed and set forth, have had the merit, by the illustrations which they have employed in its exposition, of

presenting in a forcible light, the arguments which prove that man is now placed under a supreme system of moral government. Their reasonings also have the tendency of clearly shewing the immutability of moral distinctions, and that man cannot be vicious without being criminal and miserable.

It ought also to be remarked, that while they have fallen into the error of regarding all morality as the object of the understanding exclusively, they have avoided the opposite, and much more dangerous error, of considering it *solely* as matter of sensation and feeling. Morality, as has been already shewn, is the object both of that moral feeling or sense with which our nature is endowed, and of that reason which is the chief characteristic of man. “It is by reason that we discover those general rules of justice by which we ought to regulate our actions; and it is by the same faculty that we form those more vague and indeterminate ideas of what is prudent, of what is decent, of what is generous and noble.”

The principle of Hume's theory of morals is the doctrine of utility; the falseness of which, as the measure and rule of virtue, has been already fully shewn. If the question were, Do virtuous actions conduce to the happiness of their authors and of mankind,—we should, without hesitation, answer in the affirmative. It is quite a different thing to assert, that the tendency to produce this happiness is the sole ground of moral distinctions.

Mr. Hume, the very ingenious advocate of this doctrine, has himself furnished the argument by which we may prove it to be untenable. “We ought not to

imagine," says he, "because an inanimate object may be useful as well as a man, that, therefore, it ought also, according to this system, to merit the appellation of virtuous. The sentiments excited by utility are in the two cases very different; and the one is mixed with affection, esteem, approbation, and not the other."

Now, if the affection, esteem, and approbation with which we contemplate the moral actions of moral agents, are not excited when we contemplate the utility of a steam-engine, it follows that virtue is not constituted and measured by mere utility. Actions are not accounted virtuous as they appear to be useful, but in consequence of something else of which usefulness is only an accompaniment. It is thus evident, that "moral esteem and approbation are not commensurable with mere physical usefulness; but are feelings of a peculiar class, which even he, who would represent actions as felt to be virtuous only because they are regarded as physically useful, is obliged to pre-suppose. Why should I love that which may be productive of benefit to all the individuals of the world, more than that which would be productive of similar benefit only to one individual. Or, to put a question still stronger, why should I love that which would be of advantage even to one individual, more than that which would be of injury to every being but myself? The only answer which can be given, even according to the theory that supposes all virtue to consist in utility is, that it is impossible for me, by my very nature, not to feel approbation of that which is generally useful; disapprobation of that which is in its general consequences hurtful."

Hence the assumption of that moral feeling, the origin of which it is the avowed design of the advocate of the theory of utility to account for and explain.

The selfish system of morals is only a modification of the theory of utility. It represents each individual as acting, not for the general good, but for his own personal gratification and advantage. The remarks which have been made on this system, as advocated by Paley, are sufficient to shew its futility. It is proved by our moral feelings, and by the testimony of scripture, to be false. Of all the modifications of the selfish system, this is the most exceptionable, since it connects the excess of selfishness with the image of Him who is infinitely good, and whose tender mercies are over all his works.

The last system of morals to which I shall allude is that of Dr. Smith, as expounded in his theory of Moral Sentiments,—a work, the fascinating eloquence of which is far above any eulogium of mine. In its minor details and illustrations, it is perhaps unrivalled in the depth of thought and philosophical beauty which are exhibited. It is not, however, to these, but to its leading doctrine, that I would direct the attention of the reader.

To this doctrine I alluded when treating of the affections. We do not, according to Dr. Smith, approve or disapprove of actions immediately on our becoming acquainted with their nature and consequences. It is previously necessary that we sympathize with, or enter into, the feelings of the agent, and place ourselves in the circumstances of him who is the object of the action. If we can fully sympathize with the agent,

we approve of his action as suitable and proper ; if, by placing ourselves in the circumstances of the object of the action, we can sympathize with his grateful feelings, we consider the agent as possessing merit. If we are incapable of sympathizing with the agent, we view the action as improper. We consider him worthy of reward when we can sympathize with the gratitude of others, and of punishment when we sympathize with their resentment. In a word, the merit or demerit of the agent in every case, according to this system, can only be discovered by that sympathetic tendency of our nature which enables us to place ourselves in the situation of those whom his action has benefited or injured.

“ That there may be some correspondence of sentiments between the spectator and the person principally concerned, the spectator must, first of all, endeavour as much as he can, to put himself in the situation of the other, and to bring home to himself every little circumstance which can possibly affect him. He must adopt the whole case of his companion, with all its minutest incidents ; and strive to render as perfect as possible, that imaginary change of situation upon which his sympathy is founded*.”

The great error of this theory is, that it takes for granted the existence of those moral feelings the origin of which it is its design to trace to that sympathetic process just described. Had we not been rendered capable by the author of our being of judging of actions as right and wrong, and of moral agents as

* *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, vol. i. p. 84.

virtuous or vicious, meritorious or the contrary, we could not derive this feeling from the process in question. “The moral sentiments could not be regarded as having their source in the sympathy, but as preceding it; or if no moral sentiments of any kind preceded it, the sympathy itself could not afford them—more than a mirror, which reflects to us, from the opposite landscape, the sunny hill, the rock, and the trees, gleaming through the spray of the water-fall, could of itself, without any external light, produce all that beautiful variety of colour with which it delights our vision.

“Why is it that we look with so much horror on those early ages of persecution, which collecting around the victim every instrument of torture, required of him only a few grains of incense to be thrown before a statue,—more noble, indeed, than the imperial murderer whom it represented, but still only a statue,—the effigy of a being of human form, who under the purple which clothed him with the diadem, and the sceptre, and the altar,—far from being a god, was himself one of the lowest things which God had made! When, placed thus between idolatry and every form of bodily anguish,—with life and guilt before him, and death and innocence,—the hero of a pure faith looked fearlessly on the cross or on the stake, and calmly, and without wrath, on the statue which he refused to worship,—do we feel that there was no merit in the magnanimity, because we cannot readily discover some gratitude which we may participate? We do not think of any thankfulness of man. We think only of

God and virtue,—and of the heroic sufferer, to whom God and virtue were all, and the suffering of such a moment nothing*.”

CHAPTER XIII.

FURTHER INTIMATIONS OF THE EXISTENCE OF A SUPREME MORAL GOVERNMENT; AND THE NATURAL AND NECESSARY CONNEXION BETWEEN SIN AND SUFFERING.

THE close and inseparable connexion between sin and suffering, so forcibly illustrated by the experience of mankind, is such as strikes the most heedless observer; and renders it obvious that the path which self-love, influenced by a regard to personal happiness, prescribes, is the same as that which a sense of duty enjoins. Notwithstanding what a few speculative men may allege to the contrary, while they amuse or exercise their powers in tracing nearly all natural evil to the necessity of general laws, producing occasional inconvenience, but securing a preponderating good, or to the inevitable imperfection of matter; we know from the statements of revelation, as well as from the justice and benevolence of God, that wherever suffering exists in the dominions of Him whose power and goodness are infinite, it exists as the consequence and as the punishment of sin.

There is, it is true, considerable inequality in the retributions of providence in the present state,—an inequality which illustrates the patience and goodness

* *Brown's Lectures on the Phil. of the Human Mind*, vol. iv. p. 127—1.

of God, and which is designed to teach us that he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, and render unto every man according to his works. From this inequality, and from the economy of mercy under which we are placed, we learn the danger of rashly interpreting the dispensations of God to man; and the impropriety no less of saying concerning him who is peculiarly tried, that he is eminently guilty, than of pronouncing him who is prosperous to be distinguished for piety and righteousness. While all suffering proceeds from sin, suffering is now employed by the Mediator, and under the constitution of grace, for attaining various moral uses; and is intended as trial and chastisement, and the means of maturing the graces and virtues which will fit man for the society of angels and of just men made perfect. Yet, we ought to be well convinced that misery in any and in every form, is occasioned by disobedience to the will of God,—and that the state of suffering into which the original apostasy brought mankind, is greatly aggravated by our own actual transgression. Perhaps we do not remember so practically as we ought, that we live at present under a dispensation of retributive justice, though mingled with mercy; that though in many cases there may seem to be one event to the righteous and the wicked, the equality is more in appearance than in reality; and that if our views of the Divine government were sufficiently extended, we should have ample grounds for believing that the connexion now existing between sin and its punishment, and obedience and its reward, is so great as to be a near

approach to uniformity. This uniformity is not complete and invariable, only because many of the penal consequences of sin are for a season at least suspended; but it is sufficiently so to convince us, that sin never fails to find out the sinner; and that in doing a sinful action, or in indulging an evil disposition, we are preparing sorrow for ourselves, and are treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. We do not learn from the procedure of Providence toward mankind the lesson which it is designed to teach us, unless we are more thoroughly convinced of the important truth, that suffering and death are the natural and the necessary effects of sin. “Suppose ye that those Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish. Or, those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

SECTION I.—*The Terms defined.*

What is meant by a natural and necessary connexion between sin and suffering, and what are the grounds on which this connexion is founded? Far as our observation extends, through every kingdom of nature, amidst an endless variety, we see that all things exist according to a certain order. The promised revolutions of the seasons, the seed-time and

harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, take place in a regular succession ; and in consequence of this regularity we readily believe that the same laws of nature whose effects are uniform in Europe, operate in the same way in every part of the globe. Though the constitution by which events are thus conjoined must, as the appointment of infinite wisdom, rest on the best possible grounds, we can conceive it reversed, so as to present the same events to us in a very different order. The same remark applies to the rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic economy, and to all institutions merely positive, which however excellent on account of the ends which they subserve, and however binding on the conscience as enjoined by God, might, without any contradiction, be conceived otherwise. But there are certain other things united together, whose disjunction we cannot conceive possible. It is impossible that the blessed God should relinquish any attribute of his nature ; or that his law should be otherwise than holy, and just, and good ; or that any creature should ever become independent of him, or be absolved from the duty of loving and obeying him. In like manner is it impossible that any being formed in his likeness, and with capacities for enjoyment that can only be filled by his blissful favour and presence, should be happy after it has apostatized from God, and has ceased to have access to the fountain of living waters. Does not misery follow disobedience to God, and the voluntary withdrawment of the heart from him, as a natural and necessary consequence ; and is it possible for the sinner by any mere enactment of power, or

by any means whatever, while he continues a rebel against God, to escape this consequence?

It is true, we do not see in the present life all the misery that necessarily follows the commission of sin, because mankind are placed under a mediatorial economy, and because of the patience and forbearance of Him who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and who sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. But we know that the animal and intellectual enjoyments with which mankind in their apostate state content themselves, are fleeting; that the capacity for deriving any share of happiness from them decays with the decay of life; and that even at the time when this capacity is unimpaired, and those enjoyments most abound, one such view of the holiness and perfection of the eternal God as would allow the light of truth to strike upon the conscience, would in a moment dissolve the charm, and convert into wormwood and gall all the streams of earthly enjoyment. This awful disclosure must take place at death, when the sinner will find himself surrounded with the perfections of that great and holy Lord God, of whose character and government, till then, he has been willingly ignorant, blazing for ever around him in the demonstration of their avenging justice, and awakening within him a worm that will never die, and a fire that will never be quenched:—in an eternity so full of the manifest presence of God, that he cannot for a moment flee from him, that he cannot cease to think about him, that God cannot in all the glory of his character but be fully known to him, and in an eternity

where there is no mixture of good and evil, but where all are either elevated to perfection and happiness, or remain in a state of sin and misery for ever.

But while sin, by a natural and necessary consequence, thus leads to misery, the misery of which it is productive is greatly increased by the judicial inflictions of a penal kind which sin deserves. If the act of disobedience to the will of God, and of estrangement from him, does involve the sinner, independently of any interposing power from without, in sorrow and in suffering, how inconceivably must the sorrow and suffering be augmented when inflicted as the expression of divine displeasure, and as the punishment of sin. “Who knoweth the power of thine anger! even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.” We know him that hath said, “Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense saith the Lord.” “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” The natural consequences of sin, consisting in the loss of the divine favour, in remorse and horror of conscience, in hardness of heart and blindness of mind, and in the corruption of the whole nature, are also penal consequences, and are alike unavoidable and necessary.—That the whole punishment which sin deserves and requires is infinite, and that between sin and its adequate punishment there exists a connexion not arbitrary, but fixed and inseparable, a very little reflection on the character of God, on the nature of sin, and on its tendency and effects in regard to the honours of the Deity, and the interests of the universe, will satisfy us.

SECTION II. — *Grounds on which this Connexion is founded.*

He against whom all sin is committed is the Fountain of infinite purity and perfection ; in contrast with the brightness of whose spotless holiness the heavens are unclean, and the resplendent glories of cherubims and seraphims are obscured and darkened. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity. Dwelling in the light of his uncreated and eternal purity, all moral defilement must be infinitely abhorrent in his sight. In his nature, therefore, there must be an unalterable opposition to sin ; indignation in the exercise of his hatred against it ; and possessing the power of making his displeasure felt and known, all his attributes of justice, and truth, and holiness, the honour of his greatness and majesty as God, the sanctions of his law, and his authority as the supreme moral Governor and Lawgiver of the universe, require that he should award to the sinner the desert which is meet. Exalted as Head over all, and as the common Parent of all that lives, he cannot suffer that to go unpunished which is subversive of the interests of all his dominions, and which, by diffusion, might ultimately destroy the happiness of every creature. That this is the direct tendency of all sin is evident from its nature and its bearings in reference to God and to all dependent beings. In regard to ourselves, it deforms the excellency of the nature which was designed for immortality, obliterates the holy image of God, and turns into an instrument of rebel-

lion that which was designed to be for glory and honour. In regard to God it is a violation of his righteous law, and a denial or contempt of his authority,—it is an assumption of the independency and right to govern which exclusively belong to Him;—it is a slighting of the power, and wisdom, and goodness, and truth of the Deity, it is a virtual imputation of falsehood to the threatenings of his displeasure against transgression; and it is the exercise of a deep-rooted hatred to his character, and government, and throne. In regard to the universe, sin is a breach of its order and harmony; an attempt in defiance of omnipotence to subvert its prosperity and happiness, to spread the revolt that has covered a part with guilt and dishonour over the whole; to involve every intelligent being in a course of apostasy and alienation from God, and all the inhabitants of his dominions in ruin and in death. Every single act of transgression implies this much, and infinitely more than our earthly and impaired understandings can comprehend, and must surely be pronounced, even by us, to be “deserving of God’s wrath and curse, both in this life, and in that which is to come.” Its desert is thus the ground which renders the connexion between sin and suffering so fit, inviolable, and necessary.

If sin deserves punishment, it is but meet that it should be punished as it deserves. If the spirit of enmity in the sinner against the character and happiness of God be culpable to an extent inconceivable to us, is it not proper that He who can estimate the guilt of a rebel against Him who is infinitely holy and great,

the only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, should award the adequate punishment? Does not this accord with the dictates of conscience, whose intimations, though they cannot inform us as to the full desert of sin, leave no doubt that its least desert is the loss of God's favour, and the infliction of suffering? The sense of exposure to punishment, arising from a consciousness of guilt, is the testimony which conscience bears to the justice of God, and the judgment which, in spite of the sinner, it pronounces against him, is substantially the same with the righteous sentence which the law of God delivers. Thus, every mouth must be stopped, and the whole world declared guilty, and, consequently, liable to punishment before God. As his truth renders it impossible for God to lie, and his holiness that he should look upon iniquity, so the perfection of his nature disposes him to punish sin, and demands and obliges him to treat the offender according to his desert. This is the pure and eternal justice which speaks in the sentence pronounced on the first transgressors, and in every subsequent threatening of the law,—the justice upon which the throne and government of God are founded, which forms a bulwark around the order and the happiness of the universe, which nothing that worthless rebels could offer as an atonement, even were they willing to give it, could satisfy, and which necessarily, therefore, gives to every soul that doeth evil, the punishment which is due. Hence the natural and necessary connexion between sin and suffering.

SECTION III. — *Instances in which this Connexion is shewn.*

I shall attempt to trace this connexion, as illustrated in the history of man as an individual, and also in his social capacity. Here we have evidence sufficient to convince us, not only that this connexion exists, but that every sin, whether indulged in the heart, or in the life, is followed by a punishment suited to its own peculiar character. While all sins have qualities in common, and have the same principle of rebellion against God as their origin, they differ in the circumstances of their commission, and in their degrees of aggravation: but they do not differ more from each other than their retributive awards are also different. Malice, envy, pride, covetousness, and ambition, though alike in the misery to which they lead, are in some respects different in their nature and respective consequences. It is in this way that the iniquity of the men of the world, and the backslidings of the disciples of Christ, are made to chastise them, and are the means of deepening the practical conviction, that happiness is only to be retained by walking in all God's ordinances and commandments.

In the first place, there is a manifest connexion between the exercise of evil affections and misery. Sin has often the dominion in the heart, while there is nothing flagrant in the life; and the mind may be its undisturbed dwelling-place, when there is no apparent immorality in the conduct. But as it is hateful in every form and in every place to the eyes of a holy God, so is it in every place and in every form the ground of

deep crimination and of punishment. He who made us for the exalted purposes of his own glory, has rendered it impossible for us to indulge any wrathful passion, any selfish affection, any malignant feeling, without suffering a proportional privation of happiness ; and, accordingly, the man who repines at the prosperity of another, or who wishes evil to another, disregards and loses the peace of his own soul. One unsubdued and sinful passion in Haman was enough to render useless to him all the wealth and honours with which Providence had surrounded him. “ All this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai sitting at the King’s gate.” And in seeking the gratification of this evil feeling, he fell a victim to the righteous retribution of Providence. If the description of an inspired apostle of the state of mankind be just, the strictest and the most philosophical moralist will not hesitate to pronounce it to be a state of misery ; for, if they are living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another, their condition of necessity must be that of suffering as well as of depravity.

In any situation, the man who yields to sinful feelings must be miserable. Though he may possess all outward means of happiness, the wealth, friendship, and reputation of the world, he wants that within which alone can constitute these external advantages, the elements of his enjoyment. Those around him may think him happy ; but they cannot see the soul, and are unable to observe the workings of an evil conscience and of evil passions. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. Even in the most fearless and thoughtless of them all there are secret

misgivings ; there are present disquietudes of mind which they cannot suppress, and there are apprehensions of future judgments which no efforts can avert from them. Admitting that they are free from malignant passions towards others, still are they under the dominion of some affection, which, in its restless aim at gratification, destroys their peace,—which effectually secludes from their heart all the feelings of love and devotion due to God and to the concerns of eternity. They are void of the faith which recognises His continual presence, and which exercises trust in the Providence that 'clothes the grass of the field, and feeds the fowls of the air ; they are destitute of the love that casteth out fear, and which draws away the heart towards objects the most awful and engaging : they are totally wanting in that submission to the divine will which would lead them to be contented with the things which they have, and to view all the events of their lot as under the direction of the wisdom that cannot err ; and they are without any well-grounded hope in relation to that eternity which is so near them, and into which the changes of a day may usher them. What have they to make up for these privations ? They have their consciences as accusers, and some feeling of envy, or ambition, or malignity, or sensuality, or hatred to holiness, to agitate and torment them ; they have His face against them whose word is pledged, that though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished ; they have the denunciations of that law lying upon them, which tells them that none of its violations will pass with impunity : they have to bear all the trials of life with-

out the consolations and the hope of religion; and they have to meet death, and all that is beyond it, apprehending that their portion is to be for ever with them who know not God, and who obey not the Gospel.

Are these the fruits which men reap from continuing in sin? Is it for rewards such as these that they employ all their wishes and efforts; that they live in neglect of God, of their souls, and eternity; that they bow down themselves, and serve the idols that cannot save them? What other rewards than these are they entitled to promise themselves? Has not he said, whose word should be credited, that the soul that sinneth shall die,—that their sin shall find them out,—that it shall be ill with the wicked, for the reward of his hands shall be given him, that though they dig into hell, thence shall his hand take them, and they climb up to heaven, thence will he bring them down, and that he will set his eyes on them for evil, and not for good. In what single instance are these, the sayings of the God of truth, not verified? Does not the constitution of nature, does not the order of that providence which now begins the distinction between the righteous and the wicked,—a distinction which hereafter is to be complete and eternal, does not every dispensation of God to man, fully accord with the assertion so often and so awfully repeated, that sin shall find out the sinner, and that sin shall not go unpunished.

In the second place, the connexion between sin and suffering is seen in the union between evil actions and the retributive awards of divine justice. The history of mankind is full of examples illustrative of this

union. Disobedience to God in the case of our first parents was followed by an immediate manifestation of his displeasure. Besides the agony that accompanied the consciousness of guilt, they were excluded from the spot which the stores of divine goodness, and the enjoyment of the divine presence, had constituted a paradise. When, in a few generations after the fall, the depravity of mankind increased so as to cover the earth with violence and blood, and when every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart was only evil continually, the Lord opened the windows of heaven, and with an overflowing flood swept away the world of ungodly. When the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrha had deeply degraded our common nature, and had totally effaced from them the likeness of Him in whose image they had been created, their cities and themselves were condemned with an overthrow, and are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. The trials and sufferings of individuals, as well as nations, recorded in the sacred volume, were adapted as appropriate punishments to the sins of which they were guilty. If Abraham had discord and division in his family, were they not the natural desert,—the penal consequences of his impatience and unbelief. If Jacob was repeatedly deceived and imposed on, and had thus his afflictions multiplied, they were the due reward of that imposture and falsehood of which he to his venerable parent had himself been guilty. If Moses was kept out of the land of promise for words which he uttered in the warmth of passion, it was a just retribution for the fatal effects of his anger at a former period of his

life. I pass over the cases of David and Solomon, and of the kings and prophets of Israel and Judah, not because they furnish less striking illustrations of the natural and necessary connexion between sin and its appropriate punishment, but because, for the greater part, they are more suited to private reflection than for public discussion. Nor shall I notice at any length how fully the principle of retributive justice is exemplified in the history and sufferings of the apostles of our Lord ; how he, who in the days of his ignorance and unbelief had caused the disciples to be beat in the synagogues, was himself afterward subjected to the same species of trial ; and how he who betrayed his Master betrayed at the same time his own soul ; for he went and hanged himself.

The doctrine which it is my object to establish derives ample attestations from our own personal observation and experience. Profligacy is followed by remorse, and disease, and embarrassment ; intemperance has in its train peevishness, an impaired constitution, and a premature death. Idleness and negligence bring after them disorder in our affairs, and consequent poverty and disgrace. Deceit and imposture cannot succeed always, and in the end they heap dishonour on those who practise them. Oppression, though surrounded with power, generally produces its own overthrow ; and ambition, though it sweeps all resistance before it, and towers to the attainment of its guilty ends over the liberties and the happiness of millions, cannot subdue the elements that will work its destruction. Prosperity, when it is suffered to harden the heart, and to deaden all its

susceptibilities towards God and man, becomes the means of punishment to those who enjoy it; and worldly blessings, therefore, are sometimes given as judicial inflictions, that they may lead to severer and more overwhelming judgments. The whole system of providence is to a certain extent retributive, securing to different virtues appropriate rewards, and to different sins appropriate punishments. So obvious is this, that parents take it for granted while they attempt, in educating their children, to impress their minds with those principles and maxims which will lead them in future life to the exercise of integrity, and prudence, and industry. The system of retribution under which we live approaches so nearly to uniformity, that it operates without respect of persons,—that it punishes the same vices and rewards the same virtues, whatever otherwise may be the general character of the persons by whom they are practised—that it visits the negligence and indolence of the upright and pious with poverty, while it secures to the industry and activity of the wicked abundance,—and that it follows sin by appropriate chastisement, even when the persons by whom it is committed give ample evidence otherwise of the general excellency of their character*.

* This doctrine is ably and amply illustrated by Barrow and Butler. “The general thing here insisted upon is,” says Butler, “not that we see a great deal of misery in the world, but a great deal which men bring upon themselves by their own behaviour, which they might have foreseen and avoided. Now, the circumstances of these natural punishments, particularly deserving our attention, are such as these: that oftentimes they follow, or are inflicted, in consequence of actions, which procure many present advantages, and are accompanied with much present pleasure; for instance, sickness and untimely death are the consequences of intemperance, though accompanied with the highest mirth and jollity: that though

In the third place, the natural and necessary connexion between sin and suffering may be traced in the nature and effects of that union which subsists

we may imagine a constitution of nature, in which these natural punishments, which are in fact to follow, would follow, immediately upon such actions being done, or very soon after; we find, on the contrary, in our world, that they are often delayed a great while, sometimes even till long after the actions occasioning them are forgot; so that the constitution of nature is such, that delay of punishment is no sort nor degree of presumption of final impunity: that after such delay, these natural punishments, or miseries, often come, not by degrees, but suddenly, with violence, and at once: that as certainty of such distant misery following such actions is never afforded persons, so, perhaps during the actions, they have seldom a distinct full expectation of its following:—but things, notwithstanding, take their destined course, and the misery inevitably follows at its appointed time.

“ Thus, though youth may be alleged as an excuse for rashness and folly, as being naturally thoughtless, and not clearly foreseeing all the consequences of being untractable and profligate; this does not hinder but that these consequences follow, and are grievously felt throughout the whole course of mature life. Habits contracted, even in that age, are often utter ruin: and men's success in the world, not only in the common sense of worldly success, but their real happiness and misery, depends in a great degree, and in various ways, upon the manner in which they pass their youth. It requires also to be mentioned, that, in numberless cases, the natural course of things affords us opportunities for procuring advantages to ourselves at certain times, which we cannot procure when we will; nor ever recal the opportunities, if we have neglected them. Indeed, the general course of nature is an example of this. If the husbandman lets his seed-time pass without sowing, the whole year is lost to him beyond recovery. In like manner, though after men have been guilty of folly and extravagance, *up to a certain degree*, it is often in their power, for instance, to retrieve their affairs, to recover their health and character, at least in good measure; yet real reformation is, in many cases, of no avail at all towards preventing the miseries, poverty, sickness, infamy, naturally annexed to folly and extravagance, *exceeding that degree*. There is a certain bound to imprudence and misbehaviour, which being transgressed, there remains no place for repentance in the natural course of things. So that many natural punishments are final to him who incurs them, if considered only in his temporal capacity; and seem inflicted by natural appointment, either to remove the offender out of the way of being further mischievous; or, as an example, though frequently a disregarded one, to those who are left behind. These things are not what we call accidental, but proceed from general laws, by which God governs the world, in the natural course of his providence.”—BUTLER'S *Analogy*, p. i. ch. ii.

between the whole of mankind viewed as one family, or as it exists in the numerous branches into which this family is divided. That all mankind are regarded and treated as united together in one covenant, and as constituting, therefore, in the eye of the law one moral person, is borne out not less fully by the economy and government of providence than by the tenour and statements of revelation. Every thing around us announces that God deals with us as united to Adam our covenant head ; and that we, and all mankind, in consequence of our fall with him, have lost communion with God, “are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all the miseries of this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell for ever.” “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and so death has passed upon all men, because all have sinned.” The principle of sin and rebellion against God, to which he gave existence, has descended to each of his offspring ; this forms a part of that inheritance to which they are born ; it grows with their growth and strengthens with their strength ; and from it proceeds that moral degeneracy which characterizes man either in civilized or in barbarous life. Even at this great distance we are involved in the sin and in the condemnation of our first progenitor ; and cavil as we may at the procedure of God towards our world, the fact is undeniable, that we are naturally the children of disobedience and of wrath ; that the righteousness which adorned our nature in its primeval state is not ours ; and that the blessings of original innocency and uninterrupted communion with God are now lost.

Observe how the same principle of transference, either of good or of evil, holds in all the relations of life; and how the comparatively innocent, by being associated with the more guilty, are involved in their punishment. The child of a prodigal and profligate parent, however free from its parent's crimes, may suffer all his days in consequence of them. The man, who voluntarily forms connexions with the wicked, however unwilling he may be to be considered as one of them, may ultimately share in their calamities. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but a companion of fools shall be destroyed." How do wicked men bring down judgments on the families and the lands with which they are connected as well as on themselves. The judicial infliction of plagues on the Egyptians visited many helpless children as well as their parents. When the Canaanites were destroyed, many who could not discern between good and evil perished with them. When God, in his providence, afflicts any land with famine and pestilence, the children suffer as well as those of mature years. When the sins of a people provoke God to remove the Gospel from them, the souls of the children are deprived of blessings on account of sins of which they were not personally guilty. When the heads of a family are void of industry, economy, and sobriety, all the members of the family feel the effects. But the instances are endless which shew that the punishment of sin is diffusive, and that it generally reaches the interests of those who are closely connected with the persons who are actually guilty. The instruction which this constitution of things conveys, is, that all

are by nature under sin, that all, therefore, are liable to suffering ; but that *they* are particularly liable, who unnecessarily associate with the ungodly, and who enter into those relations of life with them which require a constant and a mutual communication of thought and feeling. The authoritative injunction of Him, who knows us far better than we know ourselves, is, “ Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers ; for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness ? And what communion hath light with darkness ?—Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing ; and I will receive you, and be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

In the fourth place, even in those cases in which the connexion between sin and suffering cannot be distinctly traced by us, we are quite certain from analogical evidence that the connexion exists, and that in every case sin is the immediate or remote cause of suffering. We are taught, both by reason and revelation, to consider suffering in every form in which it may exist under the holy and righteous government of God, as the consequence of sin. It may be endured on account of the sins of others, or it may be experienced as a paternal chastisement, or it may be inflicted as a trial of faith and patience ; but it is originally occasioned by sin, and its universality is a proof that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Regarded in this light, what a fearful view of sin is afforded by the aggregate mass of suffering in all generations from Adam to the

present day. When we look back to the desolations of other years and of remote ages,—to the millions that the flood overwhelmed in a moment,—to the multitudes whom the fire from heaven hastened to their eternal doom,—to the successive and sweeping judgments of the Almighty over the face of an afflicted world,—to the dark and mysterious providences which marked the long and pre-eminent sufferings of his own servants,—to the vial of wrath poured on the chosen people, and which has rested upon them and upon their children in all the lands into which they have been carried captive ;—when I look back to the sufferings of apostles and of martyrs, who were made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men,—to the various forms of oppression, and want, and disease and death, in which human misery has been transmitted to us,—to the storms and whirlwind of moral desolation with which the species has had to contend in surviving to our day ;—when I look at the great sum of wretchedness which exists in every large city, and in the metropolis of the most civilized and most truly christian country on earth ;—at the numerous diseases, bodily and mental, which no human skill can remove ;—when I think of the sufferings which no human eye has seen, of the cries of distress and anguish which no human ear has ever heard, and of the inexpressible agonies which no human tongue can ever tell ;—when I consider that amidst this tide of sin and of suffering there stands One pre-eminent in dignity and innocence, who stands pre-eminent and alone in the extent and bitterness of his sufferings,—who though he traces his origin to heaven, and ex-

ercises the power of the invisible God, appears despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and who because he became the substitute and representative of sinners, is treated as though he were guilty, and is oppressed and afflicted, and cut off out of the land of the living,—when I consider all this, I see before me the most impressive and appalling evidence, that there exists a natural and necessary connexion between sin and suffering, and that the wages of sin is death.

The connexion which we thus see so fully established in the present state between sin and suffering, may convince us that the evil of sin is infinitely greater, and its desert more aggravated, than we are disposed to believe. If our fellow-creatures choose to call all that we tell them from the records of truth visionary, if they pronounce a state of future and endless misery to be irreconcilable with the divine goodness, they cannot deny that sin has already occasioned disease and remorse, and complicated miseries and death. It has torn away from us many of our nearest and dearest friends ; it has already given us many an hour of anxiety and sorrow ; and soon will it produce that entire dissolution of the frame, by which the body shall return to the dust whence it came, and the spirit to God who gave it. We think lightly of the evil and demerit of sin, only because our standard of judgment is defective or altogether erroneous ; we know not the holiness and terrible greatness and awful majesty of the God whom we have offended ; we think not aright of the authority and spirituality of that law which extends to every thought of the heart ; we feel not the

obligations under which the very gift of being, not to speak of the blessings that have been so constantly heaped upon us, has placed us; we appreciate not the value of that remedy which is commensurate with the guilt and misery of man, and of the blood which was shed to procure remission; and we believe not that all the declarations of the Bible respecting the future and endless punishment of sin will be accomplished. We know not all the evil of sin, and all the danger arising from it; but we may know from its effects, that it is inseparably connected with suffering,—that it leads to a state of endless seclusion from the fountain of life and blessedness, and that the misery in which it terminates, is indeed the second death. We are not only called to be the observers of sufferings, but to feel them in our persons and families: the health, the friends, the life which we now enjoy, will soon by sickness and death be taken away from us; we are in the midst of the dying and the dead, and the place which now knows us will know us no more for ever. “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up.”

If any consideration could still farther deepen our convictions, that the connexion between sin and suffering is fixed and necessary, it would be that of the means that have been employed from the beginning, and employed with so little effect, for delivering man from the power and bondage of iniquity. What is the history of God's procedure and ways to our world,

but a history of the wondrous method devised for removing the guilt, and destroying the dominion, and freeing from the consequences of sin? The object of this gracious plan is not to interrupt or dissolve the connexion between sin and misery; for this is necessary, and fixed, and unalterable; so much so, that by no enactment, even of omnipotence, can it possibly be otherwise; so much so, that the very being of depravity, the very principle of rebellion, must be utterly exterminated from the nature, before a just liability to suffering and death can cease. For the purpose of accomplishing this extermination, has God made known to us by a ministry of reconciliation; a new economy, which rests on the atonement and righteousness of Christ, through which mercy is conveyed to pardon, and grace to renew and to help us. He has sent his own Son that he might be the propitiation for our sins, and that by death he might procure redemption for them that obey him; he pours down his Spirit to apply this redemption to the soul, and to open the blind eyes, and to turn men from darkness to light, and from sin unto God; he has sent us the word of this salvation to persuade us by its testimony to flee to the refuge from the wrath to come; and to all the means of grace, he has added the dispensations of his Providence, to arouse us from the slumber and the stupor of sin, and to constrain us to embrace that only way under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

BOOK IV.

ON THE DUTIES WE OWE TO GOD.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE DUTY,—OF USING MEANS TO KNOW GOD,—OF LOVING HIM,—OF WORSHIPING HIM,—OF OBEYING HIS WILL.

THE being; perfections, moral government of God, and immortal destination of man, being clearly seen from the things that are made, and from the order of providence, we shall now inquire into the nature and extent of those duties which appear to be binding on man.

What are the grounds on which an intelligent and accountable being is bound to owe, reverence, and obey God? It is nearly a self-evident proposition, that a being of infinite perfection, who comprehends in himself all possible excellency and goodness, is entitled to esteem, veneration, worship and obedience. These are rights which it is as impossible for him to alienate, or for us with impunity and blamelessly to violate, as it is for him to cease to be self-existent and infinite, or, for us to be dependent creatures.

I. On account of the excellencies and attributes of his nature. Necessarily existing from everlasting to everlasting, the King eternal, immortal, invisible, he is omnipotent, intelligent, holy and good, and is the only

fountain of all loveliness and happiness. Comprehending in himself, and to a boundless extent, all that is great and pure and excellent,—the beauty diffused over the creation, is but the reflection of the beams of his ineffable brightness and glory. He is the foundation and the source of all being and blessedness; from whom all is derived, and on whom all is most entirely depending; of whom, and through whom, and to whom are all things. On this ground the warm devotion of the heart is his right; and to withhold from him its affections of love, gratitude, and adoration, shews a depraved insensibility to moral loveliness, and the formed principle of rebellion against the Lord and Ruler of all.

II. He is entitled to our love and obedience, not only on account of what he is, but because of the way in which he exercises his perfections and government toward us. He has given us being, and conferred on us all the rich and varied endowments of our nature; and it requires no other law than that which arises from the relation we bear to him as creatures to their Creator, to bind us, formed as we are with powers of reason and of understanding, to love the Lord our God with all our heart. As the sole Author of the gift of being, he has an unquestionable right to gratitude in return; a right to command that the capacities bestowed should be employed in obedience to himself; and that in the exercise of our faculties, and in conducting our pursuits, we should consult his will as our only rule, and as our chief end. We cannot but feel it to be the highest privilege and glory of our nature humbly to adore him, and that to be

allowed to aim at honouring him, is indeed the security of our own everlasting good. In a mind capable of knowing him, and consequently of loving him, and of feeling supreme delight in whatever relates to him, there must be something fearfully wrong, if the love of this great and holy Lord God is absent from it ; so far removed from it, that it will think of any other object in preference, and will strive and struggle against his will, in the pursuit and in the accomplishment of its own.

But the obligation which our creation has laid upon us to give our hearts to God, and to be the willing instruments in furthering his glory, is continually increasing by the prolongation of life, and by the successive supply of mercies necessary to its enjoyment. Can we live on the bounty of God, and deny him our grateful affection? What is the end for which His goodness anticipates our wants, and surrounds us with its unnumbered blessings? Is it not that our hearts may turn in love to the God who condescends to claim them, and who nourishes and brings us up as children? Is it not that we may feel that He whose goodness gives us all that we enjoy is himself the supreme and everlasting good, and that we are deeply criminal in not designedly and constantly living to his praise? In neglecting to glorify God, we are living in the daily violation, not only of the obligations which arise from the perfections of the divine nature, and from the laws of our being, but are resisting claims to our love, and gratitude, and obedience, numerous as the moments of our existence. Thus, we are exhibiting the fearful spectacle of moral and

accountable creatures, supported in being by the God whom they practically disown, and carried on by his power and beneficence into eternity, while they are in the meantime changing his truth into a lie, and are worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator.

The duties which we owe to God may be comprehended under the following heads. First, an humble attempt, in the use of suitable means, to form just notions of his nature and attributes: Secondly, the cherishing of pious affections towards him: Thirdly, acts of public and private worship: Fourthly, obedience to his will.

I. It is a duty which we owe to God, humbly to attempt in the use of suitable means, to form just conceptions of his nature and attributes. A Being of infinite excellency, and who has given us all that we either enjoy or hope for, is surely entitled to this homage. We cannot adore his perfections with understanding, unless we take some pains in ascertaining what they are; and he who is a Spirit, and whose infinitude cannot by searching be found out, requires us to contemplate him in whatever way he condescends to make himself known. The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. His work is honourable and glorious; and his righteousness endureth for ever. The admission of his being and perfections, and of his moral government and authority, implies that we are bound to acquaint ourselves with God; and that the noblest end of our faculties and pursuits is to know something of his perfections and counsels. This is necessary to

our having suitable views and impressions of our duty and final destiny, and to our living under the influence of the most persuasive motives to the practice of virtue ; as it is only when we have just notions of his nature and attributes, that we can have the full conviction of his unalienable right to the first and the best affections of our hearts ; and that we shall calmly resign ourselves to his disposal, confident that under the guidance of his power, and wisdom, and goodness, all things shall be made to work together for our good.

II. It is clearly, from the light of nature, our duty to cherish pious affections towards God. Independently of his claims to such affections, it becomes us to cherish them on account of the peace, and purity, and consolation, which their exercise yields to ourselves. The contemplation of the attributes of God should awaken corresponding emotions in our hearts,—emotions in some degree suited to his greatness and adorable perfections. These affections consist in veneration of his infinite and incomprehensible greatness ; adoration of his wisdom and power ; love of his goodness and mercy ; gratitude for his innumerable and inestimable benefits ; a disposition cheerfully to obey all his laws ; fear in the apprehension of his displeasure ; joy in the hope of his approbation ; and a desire to imitate him in doing good to others. These are the affections which it is not only the duty, but the honour of man to cherish ;—because they lead his thoughts towards an object of incomparable sublimity and loveliness ;—and because, in proportion as they are cherished is his happiness increased, and he himself advanced in the scale of moral excellence.

It is by the exercise of these affections that the truly pious man shews that his delight is supremely in God. He is the object of his highest esteem and veneration ; whom he regards with the love which a dutiful child feels to his parent, while he earnestly seeks his favour as constituting his happiness. It is this which forms his consolation and hope in adversity and in prosperity,—the possession of it gives him peace in necessities and distresses, and the want of it cannot be made up by earthly abundance. When we obtain what we chiefly love, we are satisfied even though other sources of comfort should be withdrawn : and when He who is all perfection, and who claims the heart as his abode, is enthroned in its desires and affections, the glowing language of revelation is not too strong to express all that we feel towards him. “ Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee ? ” We value whatever relates to him, or recalls him to our remembrance ; and even the place where he condescends to be worshipped becomes sacred and endeared to us from its being associated with his presence.

In proportion as we esteem or love any one, will be the uneasiness felt by his displeasure, or even by the suspicion that we may have forfeited his regard. It is thus that the man of true piety feels in relation to God, whose favour is life, and whose loving-kindness is better than life. The apprehension of having done what has offended him, and what may have provoked him to withdraw the light of his countenance, gives him pain ; and when he finds himself in darkness, deprived of his wonted firmness in adversity, cheerfulness

in obedience, and consolation in devotion, is it not natural for him to breathe his desires in the language in which holy men of old expressed similar emotions? "How long, Lord, wilt thou hide thy face? Hide not thy face from thy servant, for I am in trouble; turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies." Love, as has been remarked, will render such a condition very sad and uneasy to us, will make all other delights insipid and distasteful, all our life will become bitter and burdensome to us; neither, if this love abide in us, shall we regain our happiness of mind, till we obtain some glimpse of God's favour, some hope of being reinstated in our possession of him.

It is the peculiar characteristic of kindly affection, that it prompts us to seek the happiness of its object; and our desire to attain this end is in proportion to the strength of our affection. We cannot, it is true, add to the greatness, the honour, or the happiness of the mighty God, who gives us life and breath and all things. The essential glories and attributes of his nature cannot be affected by the virtues or vices of his creatures. Our goodness cannot extend to him, who is in himself perfect, and who is the fountain of all goodness. But there are interests in the world which he connects with himself, and which are peculiarly his own: he speaks concerning these as if he were delighted with their prosperity, and grieved by the conduct of those who oppose them. The virtue and happiness of his intelligent creatures are the object of his care; the dispensations of providence are ordered so as to advance them; and those who give to him the

supreme affection which he claims, set their hearts on the promotion of the same ends, and thus become workers together with God. All that bears the impress of his authority, they revere; all who are invested with his moral image they esteem and regard; and in doing good unto all men, as they have opportunity, they shew that they are the children of their Father, who maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Thus do they shew their good will and gratitude towards God.

It is scarcely necessary to observe that we are bound, by the light of nature, to love God supremely. If it be our duty to love God, it is obviously our duty to love him above every other object; to love him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. The same reasons which render it incumbent on us to cherish towards him the best and the purest affections of our nature, render it a duty to give him in every case the preference. If true morality requires that we should have some regard, some benevolent affection to our Creator, as well as to his creatures, then, it must require that the *chief* regard should be paid to him,—that our veneration and esteem for the excellences of the creature should be inferior to our veneration and esteem for the perfections of the Creator;—that we should pursue his favour with far greater earnestness and perseverance than the applause of men,—that the clear annunciations of his will should be obeyed, (whether they lead to self-denial or to suffering) before the most approved maxims of the world; and that when his authority comes in competition with any

other authority, we hesitate not to give to that of God our immediate and decided obedience. All this is as obvious from the light of reason as any principle of morality can be ;—for it is not more manifest that a being of infinite perfection and goodness is to be loved, than that he is to be loved with the whole heart,—that every other being is to be loved and obeyed in subordination to him,—and that every interest and pursuit are to subserve his glory. The first of all the commandments, said the great Teacher from heaven, is, “ Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord : and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.”

This is the standard of nature and reason : and yet, how few, even in christian lands can bear to be tried by this rule ? Their tastes are cultivated, and their opinions and habits are formed, and their schemes devised and pursued, as if there were no God, and no divine authority to consult. They live without any internal religion, and, if we except a few easy and customary forms, cannot say of themselves, that they have done one action which they would not have done, if there were no God ; or, that they have ever sacrificed any passion, any present enjoyment, any inclination of their minds to the restraints and prohibitions of religion ; “ with whom indeed, religious motives have not weighed a feather in the scale against interest or pleasure.” What effort do they make to render their enjoyments and pursuits acceptable to the Holy and Mighty Being, from whose presence they cannot flee ? Have they not lived and

acted as if there existed no obligation to conform themselves to the will of God; and as if the thought of consulting his will in their pleasures and employments were obtrusive.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE LOVE OF GOD.

Love to God, and to the creatures which he has formed in his image, is the fulfilling of the law, inasmuch as it is the principle on which all its enactments are founded, and is essential to the right discharge of every duty. Love to God is at the foundation of all vital religion, and of all true virtue and morality; and hence the reply of our Lord to the inquiry, Which is the first commandment of all? The first of all the commandments is, "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength:" this is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets *."

The love which we owe to God is the same in nature with that which we owe to all created intelligent beings. In the one case, the object is a Being of infinite perfection, and boundless in the moral excellences of his nature; who is besides our Creator, preserver, and benefactor, from whom we receive life,

* Mark xii. 29—31. Math. xxii. 37—40.

and breath, and all things ; in the other, the objects are creatures of necessarily dependent existence, whose moral worth is limited, and mingled with numerous imperfections. They are, of course, to be loved in subordination to Him, from whom we cannot withhold the supreme love of our heart during every period of our being, without extreme injustice and criminality. The law which measures the extent to which this affection ought to exist, declares that it should occupy the whole heart and soul and mind and strength ; that is, that it should rule and regulate all our powers and faculties in an entire and voluntary dedication of ourselves to the glory of God.

Love to God includes in it, complacency in the perfection of his character, good will to him, or delight in his happiness, and gratitude to him as the source of every blessing.

I. The boundless perfection of the divine nature and character is that which God himself views with complacency, and which he regards as his glory. This constitutes the riches, the fulness of the divine nature, the moral excellences in which God rejoices, and which he unfolds to the universe as entitling him to the supreme and continued affection of every creature. To the request of his servant, " Shew me thy glory," he replied, " I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee. And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord ;—the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving

iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." There is here an assemblage of all possible moral excellences, and each infinite in its extent—one sun of moral glory, which no man can approach unto, and which no man hath seen, in all its bright effulgence, nor can see.

The intelligent being who does not love this boundless perfection must be depraved. It is the object which every pure mind contemplates with complacency and joy. It awakens and draws to itself that affection of delight and admiration which the law declares should fill the whole heart and soul; and in the exercise of which God is loved as a being infinitely pure and lovely. Its expression is those words of the Psalmist, in which he seems to feel the inadequacy of language to give utterance to the emotion of his soul;—"Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee." This love of complacency in the moral excellences of God, I consider as essential to true virtue, or rather I would say, it is the essence of it.

II. Good will to God, or, delight in his happiness, is included in that love which is due to God. This is inseparably connected with complacency and delight in his moral excellences. It burns with intense fervour in many a mind not accustomed to analyze its own feelings and operations. That we cannot render God greater, or wiser, or happier than he is in himself, is most certain; but that circumstance does not make it less binding on every intelligent creature to cherish the affection of good will, or of benevolent joy

in his happiness. On reflection, it will appear, that the very greatness and perfection of God are reasons why his happiness should be far more valued, far more desired and delighted in, than that of any created being. If we feel it to be right that every intelligent being should be happy in proportion to his moral worth, ought we not supremely to desire, and to rejoice in, the happiness, the immortal blessedness, of Him, who is infinitely good, and just, and faithful, and true, who is the fountain of virtue and of goodness?

In the exercise of this affection of good will to God, we rejoice that he reigns, that his all-sufficiency can secure his own glory and blessedness in union with the happiness of that universe over which he rules. We are also grieved when we observe the beings whom he has formed in his image, and capable of loving Him, the glorious source of all virtue, and of loving his image wherever it is reflected, living in the neglect of Him, violating his commandments, and thus frustrating the noble designs for which they have been called into existence. In so far as their efforts would avail, they voluntarily employ them in depriving God of his glory, of his happiness, of his supreme authority, of his awful sovereignty. Nor can I help thinking that it was this view, chiefly, that so deeply affected the mind of our Lord, when, coming near unto Jerusalem, he wept over it.

III. Gratitude to God, as the source of every blessing, is included in that love which is due from us to God, and which the law declares should fill the whole heart and soul. We are so formed that we are sen-

sibly affected with benefits conferred either upon ourselves or our connexions, when they manifestly proceed from the kindness of the donor. It is from the boundless benevolence of his nature that God gives us life, and breath, and all things ; deliverance from present evil, enjoyment of present good, and the hope of future blessedness ; and is he not justly entitled to the most fervid gratitude of which we are capable ? When we reflect on his varied and multiplied mercies, freely given during every moment of our lives,—on his bounty in granting us the continued use of the powers of our nature, and in surrounding us with friends, and innumerable objects to excite and to exercise our pleasurable feelings, we may well bless the Lord with all our souls, and call upon all that is within us to be stirred up, to bless and magnify his holy name.

But when we think of the new and endearing character in which God has revealed himself to us, as the God of salvation,—on the unspeakable gift which he has given as the expression of his love,—and on the blessings of incalculable value which, through this medium, he is now communicating, and which he has declared it to be his purpose to communicate through eternity, we must surely judge that he is entitled to all the grateful affection which we can ever feel, and which, by our devotedness and obedience to his will, we can ever shew.

Thus does the law of God, the only infallible standard of duty, require that we love the Lord our God with all the heart, and mind, and soul, and strength ; that is, that we exercise this love, in the various

modifications of it that have now been mentioned, so as to rule and regulate the various powers of nature during the whole of our being.

I do not see any thing in this demand which our own consciences will not pronounce to be right and reasonable. Who will deny that He, who is the perfection of all moral excellency, the fountain of all the being, the beauty, and the blessedness, in the universe, ought to be the constant object of supreme love and complacency, of supreme good will and gratitude? What are our being, our virtue, and happiness, or those of the whole universe, in comparison of His? "Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance: all nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him?" To refuse, in the slightest degree, to this great, and pure, and lovely Being, that love which he claims, is to frustrate, in so far as this refusal goes, the chief design for which all beings have been called into existence. It is to give to what is limited and dependent the affections which He requires, whose glories are boundless, whose being is independent, and who is, from everlasting to everlasting, God.

It is only by allowing the love of God thus to fill and to abide in our hearts, that we are possessed of moral excellence, or that any of our actions can be pronounced to be truly virtuous. If that love, which is the fulfilling of the law, be absent from the mind in regard to God, how can it exist and operate in the mind in respect to our fellow-creatures? And, on the other hand,

“ If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ?” The love of God and of our neighbour is the same affection in nature, but exercised in regard to different objects, and is not only essential to virtue, but is the very principle which gives to any being or action the qualities of virtue. To require this love to God, and to the creatures that he has formed in his image, to the extent specified in the divine law, is to require beings endowed with understanding and will to be virtuous beings, voluntarily to co-operate with their Creator in the advancement of that glory and happiness for which all things exist, and to secure to themselves the true and lasting enjoyment of which their nature is capable.

This is what God demands ; and does not his demand accord with the uncorrupted capabilities of the human mind ? Are there not desires in man, essentially connected with his nature in every state, but in his state of apostacy and of darkness, which lead it as directly to God as its only portion, as the desires accompanying hunger and thirst lead us to seek their gratification from the food which Providence has adapted for us. They elevate the soul, in the exercise of holy affection and complacency to Him that made it, prompting it to view in his perfection and all-sufficiency, its great and lasting good ; to regard all enjoyments as the expression of his favour ; and even to prefer sufferings to these enjoyments, should it be the will of God to appoint them. “ As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul

after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee."

It is clear, then, that man is holy and happy, only in proportion as he obeys this first and great commandment of the law, to love the Lord God with all the heart, and with all the soul, and with all the mind, and with all the strength. Nor is it any valid objection to this position, that he may, in the present state, have some gratification while his heart is alienated from God, and opposed to his authority;—and that while his mind is in this state of enmity against God, and not caring either about the knowledge or the doing of his will, he may be drawing a considerable share of enjoyment from those inferior springs which the goodness of the Creator has commanded to flow. For, these enjoyments are in their nature fleeting; the capacity of deriving any share of happiness decays with the decay of life; and even at the time when this capacity is unimpaired, and when those enjoyments do abound, one such view of the holiness and perfection of the eternal God, and of the obligation of giving him the love of the heart, as would allow the light of truth to strike upon the conscience, would in a moment dissolve the charm.

He cannot, without disregarding his duty and happiness, without becoming a rebel against God the sovereign ruler of the universe, without relinquishing a part in the employments of every virtuous being, and without frustrating, in so far as his individual efforts and example will avail to that end, the glorious

purposes of his being,—he cannot, without these effects, cease to love the Lord God to the extent and in the manner prescribed by his law. I shall not attempt to strengthen this position, by a representation of the consequences which must follow the absence of love to God and to one another in the myriads of intelligent beings who inhabit the dominions of the only living and true God,—nor of the lamentation, and misery, and woe, that would overspread the creation, the wretched abode of beings living in malice and in envy, hateful and hating one another.

CHAPTER III.

ON OBEDIENCE TO THE WILL OF GOD :—THE LAW OF GOD THE RULE OF THIS OBEDIENCE.

THE first and the natural expression of love to God is, obedience to his will. It is of the nature of love to prompt to a compliance with the will of the beloved object. What pleasure does an affectionate child feel in fulfilling, I shall not say the commands, merely, of a parent, but his wishes ; and how eagerly does he watch for opportunities to shew his gratitude and veneration.

In like manner, love to God will lead to a voluntary and cheerful obedience to his will. If the heart be filled and occupied with this affection, what pure enjoyment is felt in complying cordially with all God's commandments ! Its language will be, " O how love I thy law ! It is my meditation all the day, My soul

breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times."

Let us inquire, in the first place, concerning the rule of that obedience which we owe to God, and, secondly, into the different forms of which this obedience consists.

By obedience to the will of God we mean the whole of our duty as accountable creatures. Every duty, whether its direct object be God, our fellow-creatures, or ourselves, is a duty which we owe to God, whose right is announced by every man's conscience. His will is the rule and the standard of right and wrong, and of moral action; and on this ground alone we are entitled to pronounce that morality extremely defective which does not emanate from the principle of love to God. Virtue is pure and elevated in proportion as it springs from this life-giving source. No sacrifice is acceptable, which is not kindled by this heavenly fire; no offering sweet, which is not seasoned by this holy salt.

I allow, indeed, that by the operation of inferior motives some exterior virtues may be cherished that are highly useful to society;—that a sense of honour, by its restraints and stimulants, may do much;—that a regard to social order may lead to the cultivation of certain habits which are of great value to the community;—that the refinement of a cultivated understanding may give to the manners the polish and correctness of good breeding;—and that a mere regard to reputation will have its weight in inducing some to observe the decencies of human life. The operation of these principles, singly or combined,

may, in the entire absence of religious motives, produce much that is conducive to the order and happiness of society ; but as it all proceeds from principles whose origin is earthly, and which have no immediate relation to the will or law of God, it possesses nothing of the nature and sanctity of true virtue, and is compatible with a state of heart alienated from God, and with a life which makes no practical acknowledgment of him in the world. If love be the fulfilling of the law, its absence leaves the action void of intrinsic moral value. Nor can the partial and imperfect discharge of one duty compensate for the neglect of another, which is enjoined with equal clearness, and by the same authority.

So closely and essentially is morality connected with the principles of religion, that the former is necessarily defective where the latter is deficient or erroneous. Every doctrine of religion, if it does not give rise to corresponding duties, suggests, at least, its own peculiar motives. From the admission of the being and attributes of one only living and true God, we deduce numerous and important obligations. From this great and fundamental truth we justly infer, that we are all the children of one Almighty Parent, and that the relations which in consequence we bear to him and to one another, devolve on us many duties of justice and benevolence ; which, if we neglect or violate, we offend against God as well as against our fellow-creatures.

There is no greater mistake than to imagine that we can be truly virtuous in the discharge of one class of duties, while we neglect another ; that we can

love God, and at the same time disobey his commandments ; or, love our fellow-creatures, and live without God. If, as I maintain, the love which is the fulfilling of the law is in every case the same affection of mind—the same in relation to God, and in relation to man, and different in no other way than that the objects in regard to which it is exercised are different, it follows as a necessary consequence, that there can be no true virtue where there is not an aiming at universal obedience. If the bias of the heart be in any measure opposed to this single affection or state of mind, to this principle which is inclusive of all law, and from which all true obedience proceeds, the whole man is wanting in the same proportion in holiness or real virtue. This universal obedience has its foundation in religion, is directed by the will of God, and animated by the hope of his favour ; while that which proceeds from other principles, is only the semblance of virtue,—it is vanity, or pride, or interest, or a generosity of disposition. The pleasures of true virtue are, like itself, divine, both in their original, and in their issue ; they begin and end in God. They are derivative and dependent, and like the light which loses its lustre, and its very being, when separated from the glorious fountain that feeds it, they decline and die when it is attempted to enjoy them without God.

In affirming that the will or law of God is the measure and rule of virtue, I am not to be understood as maintaining that the distinctions between right and wrong, between virtue and vice, are created by mere will or law, or enactment *. These distinctions are

* See the Chapter on this subject in the preceding Book.

eternal and immutable, founded in the eternity and immutability of the divine nature, and form the ground on which law and will, in order to be obligatory, must rest. It is they, and not the mere possession of supreme power, that give to the Deity the right to command the love and obedience of his creatures;—a right which exists anterior to every enactment, and the existence of which is attested by the consciences of the beings to whom the law is addressed.

The law of God is the explicit announcement of the nature and extent of those obligations devolving upon men, which had previously existed, and would have existed though no such announcement had been made. Its authority is not at all affected by the way in which it is made known to us,—that being the same, whether it is ascertained from a survey of the established order of the universe, an analysis of the powers of our moral constitution, or by divine revelation. If we are only satisfied that the voice which speaks is a voice from heaven, we are bound to listen and obey, whatever be the medium through which it reaches us.

“It is not an uncertain or mutable thing; it doth not depend upon my thinking or not thinking of it. Whether I think, or think not, whether I sleep or wake, if God is, and I am, such obligations must lie upon me necessarily and unalterably; that is, such really is the state of things between God and me, that I cannot but be under such obligations. It is vain, therefore, to suppose that the law in these respects is an arbitrary and changeable thing. It is no

more changeable than the essential references must be between God and me, while he exists, and I exist; so that I cannot make these obligations to be by my thinking of them, nor can I unthink them into nothing.

“ When we therefore read of the law of nature as a law written in us, as the Apostle’s expression is, it supposes it to have been in existence before it was written. Those mutual references between God and us had a pre-existence, whether there be any such impression upon me or no; if it remain, or if it be blotted out, that doth not nullify the obligations between me and my Maker. Cicero calls it, *Non scripta sed nata lex*, a law born with us; which results from the very existence of such a creature, of such a nature, related to the Supreme Being as his offspring, or that hath immediately been raised up out of nothing by him*.”

The law of God, then, is the expression of His will who is infinitely holy and wise, just and good;—it is nothing else than the measure and rule of that obedience which the nature of God and man make necessary from the one to the other. The obligation to render this obedience arises from the relations necessarily subsisting between a created and dependent moral agent, and the great Creator and self-existent Lord. The law which he gives to his creatures is the standard and directory, as to the nature and extent of that love and service which were previously and necessarily due. This, which is termed the moral law, was originally written on the heart of man, as well as announced to him in Paradise. It was after-

* *Howe’s Works*, vol. v. p. 291, 292.

wards issued by the Sovereign Ruler from Sinai, and there written on two tables of stone. Though immediately given to the Jews, it was not more binding on them than on the whole human race: for it is in its nature and principles fixed, unalterable, and eternal.

Different from this was the law which was given at the same time to Israel, which was partly ceremonial, and partly judicial, which was partly typical and designed to point to the good things to come, and partly related to them as a nation. This consisted of a multitude of arbitrary enactments, or what the Apostle terms, the law of commandments contained in ordinances. They were positive institutions, and, apart from the authority that enjoined them, indifferent. But they, in virtue of this authority, instantly changed their nature; and their observance or non-observance, became moral or immoral, in consequence of their being appointed by Him, who is infinitely good, and wise, and powerful, and to whose laws, wise and good as they must always be, we owe a perfect and an unceasing obedience. They were, however, in force only during the good pleasure of him that enjoined them, and were abrogated with the destruction of the Jewish polity. Under that economy they served most important ends, both as to the faith and the obedience of the worshippers, to which it is unnecessary in this place to make any more specific allusion.

But the moral law is, like the nature of God, and as the expression of those obligations which arise out of the relations subsisting between God and man, fixed and unchangeable. It was announced, explained, and enforced, at sundry times and in dif-

ferent ways ; but the duties which it enjoins were always and necessarily obligatory. This law is a perfect rule of the spiritual and moral obedience which God is entitled to receive, and which he requires from man, and to the divine excellency of which the sacred writer beautifully refers, when he says, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul ; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.” This, because its authority is universal, is impressed on the heart and conscience, is known in some measure by the light of nature, and the works of which, if a man do, he shall live in them.

This law, issuing as it does, from the God of infinite perfection, must itself be perfect. It must be an infallible measure and rule of virtue, and admirably adapted to answer the ends of a directory and standard of moral obligation. Its perfection appears,

I. From considering it as the very image or transcript of the moral character of God. The laws of any government will always afford some discovery of the spirit by which it is characterized, and of the wisdom and benevolence of the governor. The laws of God, we are entitled to presume, will indicate his character, as they will of course enjoin that which he loves, that which infinite wisdom and holiness approve, and prohibit that which he hates. Whatever his nature is, as to purity, and wisdom, and goodness, that also his law must be in regard to the same qualities ; since it is obviously impossible that he can command his creatures to do what is opposed to himself, what is repugnant to his wishes and his will.

But the character of God is the perfection of all

possible moral excellence; moral excellence, therefore, must be the object of his love; and the law which he gives to his intelligent creatures, is the expression of it. It is the image of his wisdom and truth, rectitude and goodness, perfect in itself, as it is the representation of that God, who is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. In this way we are to understand the language of inspiration which describes, "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward."

II. The perfection of the divine law, as the measure and the rule of virtue, appears from its simplicity and comprehensiveness;—characters by which it is admirably adapted to the capacity of mankind in all their diversified circumstances. It is so simple that the two precepts which embody it must be universally understood; and it is so comprehensive that the sum of all its precepts is expressed by one word—Love. The affection of mind, which this word denotes, includes in it the whole duty of man—that which he owes to God, to his neighbour, and himself;—and the varied duties, which the members of the family of God in the several worlds they inhabit are bound to perform. That law is indeed perfect, and is the emanation of boundless perfection, which expresses in few words,

universally understood, easily remembered, the whole duty of man in time and in eternity,—of man in affluence or in poverty, in rude or in civilized life, in every condition, and under all variety of dispensations; and which thus briefly and comprehensively expresses, not the duty of man only, but of all created intelligences. It is the rule by which they guide their affections and actions, in the varied spheres in which they move, and in the observance of which peace and joy are secured throughout the dominions of God.

Contrast this divine directory of moral conduct with the intricate, voluminous, and very imperfect laws of man; and we cannot fail to have the most lively conviction of the perfection of that law, which points out so clearly, so fully, and so minutely, the whole duty of man.

III. This perfection farther appears from a consideration of the ends which it is designed to attain. These are the best that can be attained, and such as God proposes to himself in the government of the universe. These ends are, his own glory, the improvement of his creatures in every moral excellency, and the happiness of the whole family of intelligent beings.

That the law of God is calculated, as it is designed, to attain those ends, is clear from the nature of what it requires. It commands us to give to God the first place in the affections of the heart;—to let his love fill the whole mind and soul, and regulate every thought, and desire, and faculty. If the nature and perfections of God be an object of supreme delight and complacency to God himself, and if the manifes-

tation and the communication of his fulness be the end for which all things are made, ought not the same end, that is, the glory of God, to be the voluntary aim of all created beings? But voluntarily to aim at this, is to love the Lord our God with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength ;—it is to make the doing of what the law requires the business of every day, and the ultimate end of our life.

In proportion as we keep this end in view, and are animated with that love which is the fulfilling of the law, do we possess moral excellency, or, in other words, are we virtuous beings. When we love what God loves, and hate what he hates, we bear his image ; we resemble him in the moral excellences of his nature. It is thus only that we advance in the attainments and in the dignity of true virtue, and possess that character which God will regard with approbation. Nor is it necessary to add, that it is in this way only we are instrumental in promoting our own real and lasting happiness, and in contributing to the peace, joy, and harmony of the universe. Such is the divine perfection of this rule of moral conduct, that it directs, to the attainment of all these objects, all the glorious ends for which our being has any value, and for which that vast empire over which God presides has been called into existence.

IV. But the perfection of the divine law will still farther appear from a view of its unalterable authority and obligation. An important part of human legislation is to amend, and often to abrogate laws, previously enacted, but which experience has proved to be faulty, either from defect or excess, and even to be

subversive of the designs of legislation, the virtue and happiness of mankind. Even the positive institutions, appointed by infinite wisdom and goodness for important, though temporary ends, are annulled and set aside when these ends are accomplished. But the moral law, as it is the expression of those obligations which co-exist with the existence of moral beings, is unalterable and eternal. It is the enactment of Him who sees the end from the beginning, by whose wisdom and goodness it has been framed, and who through this medium reflects the image of his intelligence, and purity, and beneficence, to the understandings and hearts of his creatures and subjects. If, therefore, the moral excellences of his nature are unchangeable, the law which is founded on them, and which is the reflection of them, must also be unchangeable.

It cannot be altered for the better, because it is the image of Him who is perfection, that which his wisdom and goodness affirm to be due from man to God, from man to his neighbour, from man to himself, as a moral agent and an immortal being. If any change were to be effected in it, it must be a change for the worse; and then, it would of course cease to be what it is, the law of the Lord which is perfect, the very expression of those moral excellences which he loves, of those obligations which necessarily exist. Unless it be a true expression of these moral excellences, of these obligations, it is a false and imperfect representation of what God is, of what God is entitled to receive, of what God requires: such a representation cannot proceed from the God of truth, whose wisdom,

holiness, and goodness, are infinite. May we not, therefore, affirm in the words of our Lord, that heaven and earth shall sooner pass away, than one jot, or one tittle of the law shall fail?

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW OF GOD.

HAVING pointed out the measure and rule of man's obedience as a moral agent and accountable being, let us inquire into the nature of that obedience which he is bound to render. This obedience has a reference to the commands which God enjoins, to the truths which he reveals, and to the dispensations which he appoints. In the first case he is to obey, in the second to believe, in the third to submit. In all the moving principle is, that love, which is the essence of virtue, and the fulfilling of the law. In every case it is obedience to God proceeding from love to him, differing only as the objects in reference to which it is exercised are different.

SECTION I.—*Obedience to the Commands of God.*

I shall not repeat the grounds of this obedience—grounds which are fixed and unchangeable as the moral excellences of God, and as are the obligations which necessarily arise from the relations subsisting

The first of these is the fact that the United States is a young nation, and that its history is a history of growth and development.

The second is the fact that the United States is a nation of immigrants, and that its history is a history of the struggle for a better life for all its people. The third is the fact that the United States is a nation of free men, and that its history is a history of the struggle for freedom and justice for all its people. The fourth is the fact that the United States is a nation of peace-loving people, and that its history is a history of the struggle for peace and harmony among all nations.

The fifth is the fact that the United States is a nation of progress, and that its history is a history of the struggle for progress and improvement for all its people. The sixth is the fact that the United States is a nation of hope, and that its history is a history of the struggle for hope and optimism for all its people. The seventh is the fact that the United States is a nation of faith, and that its history is a history of the struggle for faith and belief for all its people. The eighth is the fact that the United States is a nation of love, and that its history is a history of the struggle for love and compassion for all its people. The ninth is the fact that the United States is a nation of unity, and that its history is a history of the struggle for unity and harmony among all its people. The tenth is the fact that the United States is a nation of strength, and that its history is a history of the struggle for strength and power for all its people.

die." That our obedience to the commandments of God be acceptable, it is necessary,

I. That it should proceed from love to him. This, as revelation teaches us, is the fulfilling of the law. We cannot conceive that law to be honoured and duly obeyed, where there is not an intentional subjection to the great Lord and Ruler of all, arising from a conviction of his infinite moral excellences, complacency in the perfection of his character, zeal for his glory, and gratitude for his unnumbered benefits. If the heart be properly affected towards God, as possessing in himself all worth, and beauty, and blessedness, as the only all-sufficient and everlasting portion of the soul, how easy and delightful will it be to give him the love and the obedience which are his due.

II. It is further necessary that this obedience should proceed from a deep and practical sense of God's authority over us. Without this, the service which we render will not be a reasonable, and, consequently, not an acceptable, service. It is under the influence of this abiding conviction, that our subjection to the will of God, in place of being a transient act of the mind, will be a fixed and practical habit, a consecration of heart and soul to his glory ; a principle operating not at distant intervals, but like the affection of a dutiful child to its parent, or the constant obedience of a faithful servant to his master.

III. We must have respect in our obedience to all God's commandments. The perfect obedience which one of these commandments claims, is claimed by them all ; and the wilful violation of one of them is a virtual violation of the principle upon which they are

all founded, and a dishonour to the authority by which they are all enacted. This is what is meant by the Apostle, when he says, “He that is guilty in one point is guilty of all.” Along with the desire to know all the will of God, there must be the desire to practise his will as far as it is known. This is an unambiguous mark, by which sincere and universal obedience may be distinguished from that which is stinted and partial. “I am thy servant,” says the faithful servant of God; “give me understanding that I may know thy testimonies. I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.” There is in his mind a deep conviction that all the will of God is good, and holy, and wise,—that his authority is right, and ought to be obeyed,—and that all the commandments which this divine authority may enjoin, ought, because it enjoins them, to be cordially fulfilled.

These are some of the characters of that obedience which we are bound to render to the law of God. To deepen our convictions of God’s unquestionable right to receive and to demand it, and of our unalterable obligations to render it, we should reflect on such questions and statements as the following :

Has not the God, whose moral excellences are boundless, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, a title to rule the creatures which he has formed capable of knowing, loving, and serving him? What are the attributes requisite to give a supreme right to our unreserved obedience, which are not found in the God that made us, and who claims us as his? Is

he not possessed of infinite knowledge and wisdom, to discern and to arrange the plans that may best subserve the good of the universe? Is he not the fountain of goodness, and in the exercise of his bounty diffusing his tender mercies over all his works? Is he not holy and righteous, and therefore incapable of doing wrong, or of acting partially towards his creatures? Is he not the God of all power, and, therefore, able to deliver and to defend those that trust in him? Is he not most perfect, and all-sufficient; and, therefore, removed beyond the possibility of governing his subjects by deceit or injustice? Is he not our compassionate Father, who has nourished us and brought us up as children, and who rules us for our profit, that we may be the partakers of his holiness? Do we not feel that in voluntarily acting in obedience to him, we are acting in conformity to the noblest, the only valuable purposes for which we have been made, while we are improving in the endowments of persons virtuous and happy? Does not our experience, as well as our conscience, proclaim, that to disobey the least of God's commandments, is to rebel against his authority, to displease Him, whose displeasure cannot be counterbalanced by the whole world, to lose our peace, and fill the mind with painful apprehensions?

These, we are assured, are the deserts and the consequences of a single act of disobedience. When committed by our first parents, this act entailed suffering and misery on their posterity; and sin in them and in their offspring has spread desolation and death over the world. But the God of truth has solemnly

assured us, that we see but a few of the consequences of sin in the present life,—that remorse of conscience, and disease, and wretchedness, and the dissolution of the body, are only its first fruits,—that it leads to the worm that dieth not, and to the fire that cannot be quenched,—to a punishment that is everlasting, from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

SECTION II.—Obedience to God considered as a principle of belief in the truths which he reveals.

Another form of that obedience which we owe to God is, a belief in the doctrines which he is pleased to reveal. We cannot be more bound to obey his precepts, than we are bound cordially to credit all that his testimony seals as truth. There is no longer room for hesitation or doubt when we are satisfied that it is God who speaks. To reject his testimony is to do the highest dishonour to God, it is to make him “a liar.” That it is the duty of all men to believe all the doctrines which God reveals as his truth, is clear from the following considerations.

I. Because God commands all men to believe the doctrines of divine revelation. The right on his part to command our belief is not more manifest than is the duty on ours to obey. “This is his commandment that we believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ: Repent and believe the Gospel. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every-

creature ; he that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved, and he that believeth not, shall be condemned."

That which is the object of a command from God is obedience in moral and accountable creatures. Can we charge the righteous Lord and Ruler of all with demanding from us more than is meet, or, that which we are physically incapable of rendering ? Do not his warnings, threatenings, and admonitions, imply that man is accountable for his belief, and that he is just as much bound to believe what God reveals, as to do what God commands ? Were it otherwise, why should he be exhorted, to search the Scriptures, to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good ? Why should the Jews have been criminated by our Lord for not believing his word, and threatened, as the consequence of unbelief, with heavy judgments both in this life, and in that which is to come ? Why should unbelief in the Gospel be represented as the greatest crime, as incurring the most aggravated guilt, and the most fearful condemnation ?

II. The duties of believing what God reveals, and of receiving it in the manner which he prescribes, are the natural and immediate effects of love to him ; so that, if it be a duty to love God, it is a duty equally obvious and binding to believe his word. We are bound to love God supremely, because he is infinitely worthy of being beloved ; but the attributes of infinite moral excellency which he possesses, and which render us criminal should we refuse him the love of our heart, render us not less criminal should we disbelieve

and reject his testimony. If, as a Being of perfect moral excellence, he is more than worthy of our love, he is, as a Being of perfect moral excellence, more than worthy of our credit and confidence; and on no principle can it be proved, that it is the duty of man to love God, without proving at the same time, and by the same arguments, that it is the duty of man to believe the whole truth of God.

To be consistent, therefore, those who deny faith to be a moral duty, due as an act of obedience from man to his Maker, must deny it to be a duty in man supremely to love Him that made him; and, consequently, must deny the reasonableness and authority of the law of God, and the moral agency of man.

III. That man is accountable for his belief, and is physically capable of rendering this act of obedience to God, is implied in the greater part of the intercourse of life. It is implied in courts of law, in the eagerness which is shewn in presenting evidence on both sides of a question, in such a way as to influence the opinions, that is, the belief of the jurors. It is implied in the fact, that mankind regard the slanderer as culpable. But why should he be reckoned culpable, if he is not accountable for his belief, since he may, and perhaps with truth, allege, that he thought and spoke under the conviction that what he uttered was true? Is it not daily taken for granted, in the transactions of human life, that man is bound to form his judgments according to truth; that is, that as a being possessed of understanding and will, he is accountable to God for the use which he makes of these faculties in the opinions which he entertains?

IV. Every man is conscious that he is a free agent in believing or in disbelieving, and, consequently, feels that belief in the testimony of God is an act of obedience which he is bound to render. As we are in no case required to believe beyond the weight of evidence, so are we capable, in every case in which our faith is required, of weighing the sufficiency of evidence. More especially does this remark hold true, in regard to the varied and ample testimony which attests divine revelation. The majority of mankind, indeed, cannot, from want of opportunity, investigate the body of evidence on which the truth and divine authority of christianity rests; but they are quite capable of knowing, from their excellency, suitableness, and tendency, whether the doctrines be of God. They may also discover from the rich provision which the gospel makes for their spiritual necessities, whether it has proceeded from the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift. In this way they may have the witness in themselves.

Is not every man, whatever be his talents or opportunities, bound to bring the gospel to this experimental test? If this be the duty of all, it must be the duty of all to believe. Capable as they are of distinguishing the truth and divine authority of revelation, they are capable of receiving it, and consequently of giving it that entertainment which God demands for it.

V. The mind in believing or disbelieving, wherever the passions are concerned, is very much influenced by the state of the heart. We know from history,

observation, and experience, that it yields or withholds assent, in every such case, not so much according to the weight of evidence, as according to the dispositions called into exercise. But surely it will not be denied by any, save those who degrade the nature of man into the level of a mere mechanical contrivance, that we are accountable to God for the dispositions which we entertain ; and that should we allow our feelings and wishes so far to influence us in a case of deep and of eternal moment, as to bias the understanding against the light of truth, or against the use of those means by which this light might shine into our hearts, we are chargeable with great guilt before God, and in the estimation of our own conscience.

Is it not, however, to an evil state of heart, and even to enmity against God, that the Scriptures ascribe the unbelief of sinners in the glorious gospel ? Do they not affirm that the will is disinclined to give it a favourable reception, and, therefore, the mind makes choice of darkness rather than light ? “ Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life. How can ye believe, who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only ? The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be *.”

VI. Faith, as an act of the human mind, is represented throughout the Scripture as in a high degree virtuous and praiseworthy, and unbelief in the testimony of God as extremely criminal. Faith is there set forth as an act of obedience, as the confidence of the heart given to God,—as a principle which is

* St. John, v. 44. Rom. viii. 8.

essential to the exercise of true virtue,—which controls and regulates the affections and desires, and gives to what is yet future and unseen the reality of what is present and observed. But unbelief is exhibited as the opposite of this, as a withholding from God the love and confidence of the heart, as a denial of the truth of God, and direct rebellion against his authority.

All its criminality it is impossible for us to estimate. It sets aside as unworthy of credit and of confidence the testimony which God has given of his Son, and, therefore, to use the language of Scripture, makes God a liar. It is the act and indication of a mind in immediate hostility to his character, his truth, and purposes. It is a wilful, and therefore most wicked, rejection of an unspeakable gift, the expression of infinite wisdom, love, and power. Its immediate effect is, to shut out the light of God from the mind, to exclude from the efficacy of the propitiation of Christ, to bar the heart against the influences which can soften and renew it, and to prepare for a final and eternal separation from the gracious presence of God.

SECTION III.—*Obedience to God considered as an act of cordial submission.*

This form of obedience to the will of God is expressed by the words submission, and resignation:—a duty peculiarly required from sinful creatures, whose mortal career is characterized as of few days, and full of trouble.

As to the nature of this duty, it should be remarked, that it consists not in a submission to evils, but to the wise and gracious will of God in their appointment. We may, very consistently with the most dutiful acquiescence, have a lively sense of the extent of the afflictions which we are called to endure; and it is not improper in us to wish, and to use all lawful methods, to escape them. We may feel the deepest distress from our sufferings, and earnestly pray for deliverance from them, and yet be truly resigned to the will of God. We have a most instructive example of this in the case of our Lord himself in the garden of Gethsemane, when being in agony his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground; he fell on his face, and prayed, "O my Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." He deprecated the sufferings which were approaching him, and the pain, and the ignominy of the cross; but notwithstanding he perfectly submitted to the will of his Father.

In true submission, then, there may be a very lively sense of sufferings, and great anguish experienced under them, while, at the same time, the heart cordially acquiesces in the good pleasure of God. Indifference to them, were this possible, is incompatible with the exercise of this duty. For all afflictions, whatever be the source from which they immediately spring, are the expressions of the will of God in his government of this world; and indifference in any case to the expressions of his will, especially when these immediately relate to ourselves, must be highly

unbecoming and sinful in us. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him." It was the complaint of the prophet that Israel disregarded the discipline and rebukes of the Almighty. "O Lord, thou hast struck them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return."

In a cordial submission to the dispensations of God, because they are of his appointment, there is an approval of the understanding, arising from the conviction that all which God does is good, as well as holy and just; and that though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies; for he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men. There is a subjection of the heart and will to God in the discipline of his providence, and an ordering of the affections and temper of mind in accordance with the frowning aspect of the divine government. If, says the person who is thus truly resigned, I shall find favour in his eyes, he will remove this painful visitation; but if he shall say, I have no delight in thee, behold here I am, let him do to me as seems good in his sight.

It is scarcely necessary to prove that resignation is an act of obedience which man is bound to render unto God. Consider,

I. His unquestionable right to dispose of us, and of ours. He is the sovereign Lord, Ruler, and Proprietor of all things, who has given us being, and who continues to bestow on us life, and breath, and

all things. It is not more manifestly our duty to obey his law as the rule of our thoughts, feelings, and actions, than it is to submit to his providential government, as furnishing the rule of our comforts, hopes, and sufferings. Our right to all that we call ours is founded on his favour; and the resumption of any part of it ought surely to be viewed with humble submission, and even with the frame of thankfulness. This consideration led Job, when deprived of all his comforts, with composure and acquiescence to say, "Naked came I into the world, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." The sufferer, when under the influence of this calm, submissive, and heavenly state of mind, hears the voice of God addressing him amid his distresses and bereavements, "Be still, and know that I am God. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare if thou hast understanding. What art thou, to express a murmur at any of my dispensations, or to think of questioning the entire rectitude of any part of my procedure? I will do what I will with mine own."

II. Reflect further on the infinite purity and rectitude of God, and we cannot doubt the duty of the most entire submission to His will. His government is conducted in judgment and in justice; and he cannot, in any part of his procedure towards the subjects of his vast empire, do any thing unworthy of boundless rectitude and goodness.

With regard to us he does not and cannot injure

us; for we have incurred the penalty of transgressors, and our sufferings are less than our iniquities deserve. "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" Surely, it is meet to be said unto God, "I will not offend any more. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, and because his compassions fail not." With just views of the character of God as holy and righteous, and of the unalterable obligation and authority of his law, and of our own deserts, we shall see much mercy accompanying our severest sufferings, and we shall be disposed to say, "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, because I have sinned against him. I will submit cheerfully to his will, and patiently wait for him."

III. We must also regard his fatherly love in our afflictions. This consideration will greatly tend to reconcile us to the most painful events of our lot; since it will teach us to regard them all as not only proceeding from the hand of a Father, but of a Father whose love to us has been shewn by unnumbered blessings, and by an unspeakable gift. Can we doubt as to the light in which we ought to view our privations and sufferings, when he himself has told us in his word, "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then will I visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and

scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons ; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not ?”

When we consider, then, that however severe may be our sufferings they proceed from love, and are designed in mercy to soften and purify our dispositions, to deaden our sensibilities to earth, and to make them more alive to heaven, we have a powerful motive to induce us to exercise the most contented and submissive frame of mind under the will of God. What reason have we to feel otherwise, when we are already assured, not only of the origin, but of the final issue of pain, and sorrow, and death ? These are among the things that work together for good to them that love God. Their light affliction which is but for a moment worketh out for them a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory.

There are three things which we shall find most helpful to us in the discharge of the great duty of submission to the will of God.

I. A heart full of love to God. We can bear much from a beloved object, which we could not endure from the same person had we viewed him with mere indifference, and still less had there been any hostile bias in our mind against him. On this principle, trials and bereavements irritate the feelings of the wicked, and awaken their complainings and murmurs against the wisdom and goodness of the providential government of God. They are fitly compared to a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke. Judging from the apparent effects of their afflictions, we might ask, why

should ye be stricken any more, for ye will revolt more and more ?

It is otherwise with those who love God. There is that affection in their hearts to their heavenly Father, which assures them that all his ways must be mercy and truth towards them; and that beyond the cloud which now throws its shadow around them, is the light of God's countenance, the eternal sunshine of his favour and presence. Loving, as they do, the Lord God, how easily can they trust in his wisdom and love, even when their sorrows abound, and confidently hope for deliverance, as well as for increasing conformity to the divine will and likeness.

II. A prudent anticipation of the evils which are incident to the present state. We know not all the evils which, in passing onwards to a better world, we shall be called to endure; but we know that it is appointed for all men once to die. We must go the way whence we shall not return. Before we reach the termination of our earthly course, there may be before us trials of which we are now little aware, arising from bereavement of friends, from sufferings in our property, in our health, in our reputation. Would it not be well for us at all times to think of our liability to these, and many other evils? Would it not be wise in us to conceive ourselves visited with such afflictions? But, especially would it not become us to remember our latter end, and thus, as the Apostle expresses it, to die daily? In this case, when sickness and death actually arrived, we should not feel as if some strange

thing had happened unto us; but we should be able to welcome them as events for which we had long made preparation. Having been accustomed to contemplate them, we should be better able to say when called to encounter them,—Into thy hands, O my heavenly Father, I commit my spirit. I resign myself to thy guidance, to thy disposal, to thy boundless love and mercy in Christ Jesus.

III. Fervent prayer. This has been found in experience to be the most effectual means of communicating the peace of God which passeth all understanding. It calms the mind under sufferings, whether they arise from our fellow-creatures, or from the immediate visitation of God. It reminds us where we are to seek for comfort and support, to whom we are to look and to cry for deliverance, that God is our refuge and our strength, and a very present help in the time of trouble. The example has been left us by the faithful in every age, who when their hearts were overwhelmed within them, had recourse to the Rock that is higher than they, and every one of whom had always good reason to say, “I love the Lord, because he has heard the voice of my supplications. Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.” Above all, the example has been left us by our blessed Lord, who when in agony prayed frequently and still more earnestly to God.

In exercising unreserved submission to the divine will, then, we should remember, that it is the will of our sovereign Lord, who has an indisputable right to govern us, and an absolute power to dispose of us, and respecting whom we should ever say, “It is

the Lord, let him do to me as it seems good to him." It is the will of our best Friend, who loves us far better than we love ourselves; "who is concerned for our welfare as his own dearest interest; who by innumerable experiments hath demonstrated an excess of kindness to us; who in all his dealings with us purely doth aim at our good, never charging any duty on us, or dispensing any event to us, so much with intent to exercise his power over us, as to express his goodness towards us; who never doth afflict or grieve us more against our will, than against his own desire,—never, indeed, but when goodness itself calleth for it, and even mercy doth urge thereto; to whom we are much obliged that he vouchsafeth to govern and guide us, our service being altogether unprofitable to him, his governance exceedingly beneficial to us. Doth not such a will deserve regard? May it not demand compliance from us? To neglect or infringe it, what is it? Is it not palpable folly? Is it not foul disingenuity? Is it not detestable ingratitude *?"

* Barrow's Discourse on Submission to the Divine Will, v. iii. p. 85.

CHAPTER V.

GOD ALONE TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED AND WORSHIPPED
AS GOD.

THE law requires, as we have seen, that supreme love to God should rule and regulate the affections and faculties of our nature. The first and natural expression of love is obedience to the will of God, in all the precepts which it enjoins, in all the doctrines which he reveals, and in all the dispensations which he appoints. In the exercise of love we are further led to make God alone the object of our adoration and worship ; and to acknowledge him as our God, and give him the glory due unto him, to the entire exclusion of whatever might claim the place and the honour of Deity. The first commandment, accordingly, is, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

This is, in fact, a modification of the great commandment of the law, which requires us to love the Lord God with all our heart, and soul, and mind, and strength. In commanding us to have no other gods before him, we are to understand the great Lord and Ruler of all as enjoining us to give to him the affection, and reverence, and service which are his due ; while we are never to dishonour him by substituting, however partially, any other object in his room. We are to acknowledge him as our only Lord God, by entertaining towards him suitable affections, and by that sincere, devoted, and universal obedience, which we are bound to render. We are to own him in the

infinitely pure and holy character in which he has made himself known,—in his spirituality, omnipresence, omniscience, wisdom, and power,—in all the moral perfections of his nature,—as God the Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer;—whom alone we are to worship and glorify as God, by giving him the homage of our whole hearts, by exercising the affections of love, trust, resignation, and dependence, in regard to him, and by making him our ultimate end in all things.

This duty so very obviously arises out of the relations which man bears to God, that a law expressly enjoining it might seem superfluous. Is it possible for human beings to confound the Creator with the creature; the God of all perfection, with a created, finite, and dependent being, or to give to the one the homage which is exclusively due to the other? Experience proves that this is not only possible, but that such is the proneness of mankind to idolatry, and to substitute objects of supreme regard and esteem in room of God, that they have not been preserved from this folly and abomination by the powerful motives and threatenings of Revelation. They have given to the meanest of his works the worship and service which are due to God; and thus have been guilty of conduct which includes in it almost every sin. Nor are idolaters exclusively chargeable with this wickedness; but all who give to any object that supreme devoted regard which alone belongs to God,—the sensual, the covetous, the ambitious, and profane,—nay, all who bestow on what is lawfully beloved an inordinate and supreme affection.

The violation of the duty enjoined in this command, implies a denial of the perfection of God; a withholding from him that which is his due; and a substitution of the creature in his room.

I. It is a denial of the perfections of God. It is a practical falsehood in regard to his being, almighty power, omniscience, omnipresence, and all the moral excellences of his nature. It is, what the Apostle terms, changing the truth of God into a lie. Do they acknowledge him to be what he is, the only living and true God, the fountain of being and of happiness, who give their homage and their hearts to idols? Is not this to commit the two great evils mentioned by the prophet, to forsake God, the fountain of living waters, and to hew out unto themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water? Is it not a denial of his creating and preserving power, of his supreme authority as the only moral governor and judge, of his bounty in supplying the wants of every thing that lives, and of his sovereign right to command the obedience of his creatures, and to do what he will with his own? For a creature voluntarily to act thus towards the Creator, towards God, the centre and the sum of all perfection and blessedness, is doing the highest dishonour to Him of which he is capable.

II. It is, in addition to a denial of his perfections, a withholding from him that which is his due, and that which he claims. No right can be more manifest, and none more unalienable, than that of God to the love of the heart, to the voluntary obedience of the life, to direct and govern his creatures according to his good pleasure. He is pleased with their love and

obedience, as they are the means of promoting his glory ; and he is displeased and dishonoured when their love and obedience are withheld. “ A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master : if then I be a father, where is mine honour, and if I be a master, where is my fear ? saith the Lord of hosts.’ Every breach of the duty enjoined in the first commandment, is a wilful refusal of the honour, worship, and fear, which every intelligent being is bound to render unto God. When we consider how worthy God is of being beloved, on account of the boundless excellences of his nature, the unnumbered benefits which every moment he bestows, and of which He alone can be the author, and that true and permanent happiness is to be enjoyed only in obeying his commandments, the act of withholding from him the love and homage which are his due, is full of wickedness and criminality.

III. But it is an aggravation of this conduct, that it elevates a mere creature to the place of God. However exalted that creature may be, it is nothing more than a dependent, finite being, without power, or goodness, or happiness, but as they come to him from God. To give him religious homage, or even to give him that supreme regard and reverence which God claims as his, is to affirm that he is more excellent, more deserving of the love and confidence of the heart, than is the Lord and Creator of all. It is to deny divine perfections to God, and falsely to impute them to a weak and fallible creature ; it is to withhold from God the love and the acknowledgment which are due to him, and to give them to some object raised into his

room. Is there not in this a complication of baseness, falsehood, injustice, and ingratitude, far beyond the power of human language adequately to express? What are the evils which this sin does not include? It is practical atheism; it is adding impiety to the guilt of denying the being and attributes of God; and it is saying to the Almighty, Depart from us, for we will not own nor serve thee, and we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.

But we are not only bound to make God alone the object of our adoration and worship; we are to render him this adoration and worship in the way which he prescribes. The design of the second commandment is to make this known to us. The first prohibited the acknowledgment of false Gods; the second prohibits the worshipping of idols, and even the professed worshipping of the true God through the medium of idols. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, nor any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow thyself down to them, nor serve them; for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments."

Though this commandment consists in a prohibition, the duty implied in it is as fully enjoined as though it were expressly mentioned. That is, that God is to be worshipped spiritually, according to his nature and attributes. It is that which our Lord points out as

being required in acceptable worshippers : “ The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth ; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit : and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

That spiritual worship only is that which is suitable to God, may be inferred from the light of nature. That he is infinite in the perfections of his nature, and therefore not material, is known just as clearly as that he is God. But if he is spiritual in his nature, and infinite in his perfections, the only worship which is suitable to him, and which he can accept from his intelligent creatures, is that of the understanding and the heart. It is not more manifest that it is our duty to worship him at all, than that it is our duty to give him that kind of worship which his nature and ours render necessary, the one from the other. Besides, we are surely bound to offer unto God the best that we are capable of giving.

This, accordingly, is what he has always commanded to be given him ; under the patriarchal and Mosaic economy, not less than under the gospel dispensation. The rites prescribed in the worship were various, but so indispensably requisite were the love and homage of the heart, that, without them, the observance of the outward ordinances was regarded as hypocrisy. Hence the terms in which God speaks by the prophet Isaiah of those institutions which he himself had appointed, when observed in a vain and formal manner, and not as the medium of conveying the devout affection, esteem, reverence, and

gratitude of the whole soul. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons, and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them." It is in allusion to the same heartless and hypocritical worship, that God says, by the prophet Hosea, "Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit."

It is scarcely necessary to remark, that in spiritual worship the whole soul is engaged, the understanding and the heart, in sincerely and actively adoring, loving, and honouring God. Those affections are called into exercise, which are suitable in the contemplation and worship of the Most High. Admiration of his glorious excellencies and perfections, thankfulness in the recollection of his unnumbered benefits, delight and complacency in his all-sufficiency as the chief good and portion of the soul, the deepest reverence of his character, attributes, and procedure, humility and self-abasement in the presence of the High and the Lofty One, whose name is holy, and whose habitation is eternity, and in all, an affectionate concern for the glory of God. It is with similar views, affections, and designs, that the inhabitants of heaven express their adorations: "Thou art worthy,

O Lord, to receive honour, glory, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. Blessing, honour, glory, and power to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever." "We," says the Apostle, speaking of himself and of his fellow-disciples in Christ Jesus, "we are the true circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh."

CHAPTER VI.

THE IDOLATRY OF MANKIND.

THOUGH in the second commandment the prohibition of the worship of idols, and even the use of images in the worship of God, be most explicit, we learn from authentic history, as well as from the statements of Revelation, that mankind have been prone to idolatry. "They changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever, amen*."

Every survey of the heathen world has confirmed the entire truth of this statement. It may, indeed,

* Rom. i. 21, 25.

seem extraordinary that nations who had attained to the utmost improvement of the human understanding, whose devotedness to science, and skill in the fine and ornamental arts were unrivalled, should continue, during many ages, in the neglect of the living and true God, and in the grossest idolatry and immorality. This is the more surprising, when we consider, that a revelation of the character, perfections, and will of God was originally made to the human race; that its substance must have been carried with them over the earth after their dispersion on the plains of Shinar, and conveyed, by tradition, in a form more or less perfect, to their posterity; and that the impressions thus made, the lessons which the frame and order of nature and the course of providence continually suggested, were calculated to confirm and preserve. For we have the authority of an Apostle for maintaining that the being and character of God are made manifest by the constitution of the universe, and the moral government of the world. "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead. Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless he left not himself without witness; in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."

With these advantages, their apostacy from God we are bound to consider as wilful. The Apostle, indeed, tells us, that they did not like to retain God in their knowledge; that they are without excuse,

because that when they knew God they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Being void of love and reverence for his character and perfections, they did not honour him, either by their profession, or by their practice, or by any efforts to bring others to give him homage; they lived, in the enjoyment of his bounty, in insensibility and ingratitude; they amused themselves with idle speculations, by which they were only still more bewildered, and confirmed in error and ignorance; and assuming the air, the tone, and the garb of wisdom, they were, in regard to all religious and moral truth and duty, in reality fools. "They walk," says the Apostle in another passage, "in the vanity of their minds, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

SECTION I.—*The History of Idolatry.*

Let us consider the history and extent of idolatry. The communications that were repeatedly made to men concerning the perfections of God, and the way of salvation through the promised Deliverer, must have preserved the human race, during the earlier ages of the world, in the knowledge of the living and true

God. Though superstitious practices may have prevailed before the flood, it does not appear that idolatry, strictly speaking, had existence till some centuries after that catastrophe. It is probable that it began in the adoration of the heavenly bodies,—the sun, moon, and stars, as we find in the early period in which Job lived, that these were recognised as objects of worship. “If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in brightness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand; this also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge, for I should have denied the God that is above *.”

The splendour and usefulness of the sun and moon led the Chaldeans and Assyrians, among whom their worship began, to regard them as peculiarly manifesting the divine goodness. It is supposed that a further step in this species of idolatry was the adoption of the notion, that the heavenly bodies were either inhabited by superior intelligences, or were themselves living beings, and exerted something like a mediatorial influence with the Deity. They were at length fully deified; and those who retained any idea of the Supreme God, thought him too far above them to be the object of devotion. This worship of the host of heaven prevailed over a great part of the world, both in ancient and in modern times; and has not been confined to any stage of civilization, or to any rank in society.

* Job, xxxi. 26—28.

Another species of idolatry, and which probably began at an early period, was the worship of deified mortals. It is not unlikely that of these Noah was the first. The traditions respecting a man, who, on account of his eminent piety had been delivered from the deluge that had swept away the human race, and had been preserved by a miraculous interposition to be the father of mankind, would lead posterity to reverence him, and, as ignorance increased, to adore him. They would soon associate others with him in this honour, who had been the inventors of things useful and necessary to human life, and who had been benefactors to the nations. Being thus exalted to the rank of gods, they had those attributes ascribed to them, and that religious homage paid to them, which belong only to the living and true God. The Greeks and Romans, and other pagan nations, raised the chief of their idol deities to the place of the Supreme Divinity, and represented their Jupiter, to whom the poets ascribed indecent actions, as the father of gods and king of men, and as exercising universal dominion. They thus shewed, that while they retained some notion of the true God, they perverted and corrupted it; and changed his truth into a lie, by giving a false representation of his being and perfections, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator.

The natural consequence of deifying men, and of regarding one distinguished individual as their chief, to whom they ascribed the titles and attributes of God, was, that their deities were represented as pos-

sessed of divine excellences, and of the base passions and vices of mortals. What must have been the state of morals, when among the multitude of the gods there was not one of whom some scandalous thing might not be related; and when even Jupiter, their head, was guilty of actions that ought not to be so much as named? Is not the statement of the fact a comment on the language of the Apostle regarding the heathen world;—that when they knew God they glorified him not as God; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened,—and changed the truth of God into a lie?

They advanced, however, in their idolatrous worship still farther than this. They constituted the images and hieroglyphic symbols of their deities, gods. The sun and the host of heaven were not always visible, and as they imagined fire denoted them, they gave to this element, in several eastern nations, divine homage. Many of the lower animals, which were at first, perhaps, used as signs or emblems of the wisdom, power, or goodness of God, became objects of worship. Thus the Egyptians placed the sheep, the goat, the hawk, the crocodile, the cat, and dog, among the number of their gods. The very statues and images which were raised to their deities shared divine honours with them. This was not done among the rude and the savage merely, but by the Athenians and Romans. Nor is there a stronger proof necessary of the length to which this species of idolatry was carried at Athens, than the circumstance which is recorded of Stilpo the philosopher. He was brought before the tribunal of the

Areopagus for saying, that the statue of Minerva was not a god; and though he endeavoured to defend himself by alleging that it was not a god but a goddess, he was commanded to leave the city.

Thus they began to ascribe divine excellences, and to pay divine honours, not to persons merely, but to things;—so that innumerable objects of nature were, on one ground or other, personified and deified. Nay, so entirely were their foolish hearts darkened, that they constituted the abstract qualities of things, gods; and in their proneness to polytheism, they extended this honour sometimes to pernicious, as well as to useful, properties and affections. They erected temples, and gave religious homage to the gods of fortitude, health, concord, victory, liberty, and the like. The passions, the diseases, fears, and evils, to which mankind are subject, were deified, and had fanes consecrated to their honour. There was scarcely any thing in nature, however monstrous, but some heathen nations worshipped as a god;—so that, to use the language of the learned Dr. Cudworth, “in deifying the things of nature and parts of the world, they called every thing by the name of God, and God by the name of every thing.” They changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and to four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

Hence the multitude of their gods was endless;—gods celestial and terrestrial, who presided over distinct tribes, and cities, and groves, and rivers, and fountains. These they ranked in various orders, but they conceived that to all of them religious worship was due. Even to those of them whom they regarded

as evil beings, they gave divine honours. Plutarch, a highly respectable philosopher and historian, mentions certain festivals and sacrifices in which some revolting rites were practised, instituted for the pleasing of evil and malignant demons, and averting their wrath. The same fact is attested by Porphyry, who distinguished himself as a bitter enemy of Christianity;—and the testimony of both affords a comment on the assertion of the Apostle, that “the things which the Gentiles sacrificed, they sacrificed to devils, and not to God.”

The extent of idol worship, and the similarity of the system of idolatry in all the countries in which it has been practised, are truly amazing. From these circumstances, some learned writers have been led to trace it up to the plains of Shinar, and to maintain that it issued from thence, and accompanied the progress of the human race over the globe. Whatever truth there may be in this opinion, the history of mankind amply proves, that man, without the light of revelation, is prone to idolatry, and to give to the creature, or to the deifications of his own mind, the worship which is due to God. This proneness had widely shewn itself so early as the time of Abraham, when it was necessary to separate that patriarch and his posterity after him, to preserve the knowledge of the character and will of God. With the exception of this highly-favoured people, idolatry spread over all nations; and at the commencement of the Christian æra, and long before, filled the world.

SECTION II.—*The Nature of Idolatry.*

I shall make a few remarks on its nature. Idolatry consists either in the worship of God through the medium of visible symbols, or in ascribing divine excellence to idols, and giving them religious worship as gods. It has been maintained by some learned men, and especially by Dr. Cudworth, that it was in the former way only that idolatry prevailed over a great part of the heathen world; and that under the names of idol deities the living and true God was worshipped.

It is highly probable, if not quite certain, that idolatry took its rise in this way. We cannot imagine that mankind would make the transition at once from the worship of the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, to a state in which they considered the host of heaven, and blocks of wood and stone, the fit objects of adoration. When the children of Israel said respecting the golden calf, which, at their request, Aaron had made, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," it is impossible for us to conceive, that after the extraordinary proofs that were afforded them of the eternal power and godhead of the self-existent Jehovah, they could believe that a molten image was endued with the properties and excellences of the Divinity. It is nearly certain, that they meant, and could only mean, that this image was the visible symbol of that God who had delivered them from Egyptian bondage, and hitherto conducted them through the wilderness. In the same way, it is probable, idolatry in every case took its rise.

But it is very certain also that the worship which might originally have been intended for the true God, and addressed to him through the idol, was formerly paid to the idol itself. So much was this the case, that the notion of the true God, as there is the most ample evidence for believing, was almost obliterated during many ages in the heathen world. They literally constituted innumerable objects in nature, and the works of their own hands, the gods whom they worshipped. Those who retained an obscure and imperfect idea of one Supreme Being, united with it foolish errors which completely neutralized its effect on their minds. They either thought him too far removed from them to be worshipped by mortals, or confounded him with the chief of their hero divinities, and gave to that same Jupiter, whose history it would pollute the mind to hear, the divine honour due to God. Mankind peopled every region with false deities ; among whom they divided the government of the world ; some of whom were deemed supreme in their several districts ; but all of the same nature and kind.

It was in this way they changed the truth of God into a lie. The whole system was a practical falsehood on the being, power, wisdom, and goodness of God. At Athens, and still more at Rome, whose policy it was to give a place to the deities of the nations whom they conquered among those of the empire, you behold a most refined people, paying divine homage to representations of God the most foolish and false. He is the living God, but their deities were devoid of life,—He was the Maker of all things, but they were non-entities, and could produce

nothing;—he gives to all life, and breath, and all things, but they were dumb idols, and could not profit those who trusted in them. “The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men’s hands. They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not; they have ears, but they hear not; noses have they, but they smell not; they have hands, but they handle not; feet have they, but they walk not; neither speak they through their throat. They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.” To substitute such vanities in room of that God who is possessed of all perfection, and that to an infinite degree,—who is a spirit, and who requires his worshippers “to worship him in spirit and in truth,”—who is holy, and “of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,”—who is most bountiful, and whose “tender mercies are over all his works,”—whose universal presence fills all space, and whose habitation is eternity,—was an undervaluing of the glorious Majesty of heaven, and nothing less than a practical denial of his being and attributes; but let us consider—

SECTION III.—*The cruel and impure Rites of which the idolatrous System of Worship consisted.*

The mode and the means by which the living God was to be worshipped were all made known by revelation. From the ritual instituted by divine appointment, comprehending prayers and praises, sacrifices and oblations, the heathen derived the notion of some of the ceremonies by which they paid religious wor-

ship to their deities. The whole system was framed so as to strike the senses, and adapted to the human mind in a state of utter darkness and depravity.

In their religious festivals, which were celebrated in honour of their gods, their deities were represented as performing the most immoral actions. These actions were ascribed to Jupiter, the chief of their deities, as well as to the inferior gods. The same gods, as St. Austin observes, were laughed at in the theatres and adored in the temples. Rites the most foolish and immoral were used in their worship, which were prescribed by the laws, established by custom, and countenanced by the magistrates. The offering of human sacrifices, which appears to have been general over the pagan world, was one of these. That it prevailed among the Britons, Germans, and Gauls, we are assured by the testimonies of Caesar and Tacitus. Among the Romans this inhuman practice prevailed so late as the time of the Emperor Adrian. Nor can there be given a more revolting proof of its prevalence among this distinguished people, than that when Rome was taken by the Gauls, the most advanced in age and in honour gathered themselves together in the Forum, and after being devoted by the pontiff, consecrated themselves to the infernal gods. In Mexico alone it has been supposed that not less than twenty thousand human beings were annually sacrificed. In some nations numerous infants were devoted to destruction in honour of their god Moloch.

In addition to this most inhuman practice, there were other cruel rites used in the worship of the gods.

The priests of Baal, as we learn from the first book of Kings, "cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets till the blood gushed out upon them*." At Sparta they whipped boys, often till they died, on the altar of the goddess Diana. This is not the place to notice the indecent and immoral practices which were observed over the heathen world, and especially in the civilized nations, in honour of their gods and goddesses. But these practices, together with the gross and general depravity of manners which the system of idol worship produced, furnish an illustration of the Apostle's statement; "wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves."

The grossest impurity of manners, the violation of every precept in the decalogue, was sanctioned by custom, if not enjoined by law. Theft was permitted in Egypt and in Sparta. Infants that were weak or imperfect in form were exposed and put to death by the authority of the legislator Lycurgus. Humanity, in the sense in which we understand that term, was in a great measure unknown. There was no provision made for the poor, the destitute, and helpless. Nor is the account which has been transmitted to us by the page of history of the sensuality and depravity that pervaded the heathen world, different from that which is recorded by the apostle Paul in the conclusion of the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, "God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those

* 1 Kings xviii. 21—41.

things which are not convenient ; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness ; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful."

SECTION IV.—*The Influence of Legislators and Philosophers in extending this idolatrous and immoral System.*

They, it is alleged, were not idolaters themselves,—that their doctrines to a considerable extent counteracted the tendency of idolatry,—and that the mysteries which were so generally established, and to which the initiated only were admitted, were expressly designed to preserve the knowledge of the one true God.

I shall prove that these suppositions are unfounded ; and that the philosophers and legislators of antiquity were the supporters and patrons of idolatry.

It must be admitted that they were placed in circumstances in which, whatever might have been their own views of truth and duty, they had it little in their power to influence effectually the notions of the multitude. They wanted the sanction of divine authority to enforce their instructions ; they were not the authorized ministers of religion on whom it devolved to explain the doctrines relating to the gods and to their worship ; their opinions, besides, on these matters were so obscure, and so much at variance with each other,

that their effect, had they been communicated beyond the walls of the schools, could only be to bewilder, if, indeed, they would have any effect whatever. They, therefore, despised the people as incapable of understanding their speculations, or of profiting by them. "Philosophy," to use the language of one of the most eminent of their number, "is content with a few judges; it designedly shuns the multitude, and is by them suspected and disliked; so that if any man should set himself to vilify all philosophy, he might do it with the approbation and applause of the people*."

Philosophers, accordingly, so framed the vehicle in which their instructions were conveyed, and in general so wrapped the doctrines of divine things in fables, that they proved of no use in enlightening the people. With the exception of Socrates, who adopted a more familiar strain, their professed aim was, not the religious and moral improvement of mankind, but the exercise and display of their own genius, and the gratification and applause of a few learned men. In truth, scarcely one of them had any thing to communicate on religion which would have been at all profitable to the people. One of the most numerous sects maintained the absolute impossibility of coming to the knowledge of the truth in any case, and employed all the force of their ingenuity and eloquence to invalidate the proof of the being of God. Others, while they allowed that there are different degrees of probability in evidence, contended that we cannot certainly know or understand any thing, and that, therefore, we should keep our minds in a state of scepticism concerning all things,

* Tascul. Quest., lib. i. cap. 1.

Even the Stoics, whose pretensions to certainty were highest, and who in some things come nearest to the truth, acknowledged, that the natures of things are so covered from us, that all things seem uncertain and incomprehensible.

In confirmation of these remarks, it may be observed, that scepticism and atheism, in Greece and Rome, kept pace with the progress of philosophy, and that the world was somewhat advanced, before speculative men began to controvert or deny the existence and agency of God. Aristotle mentions, that all the philosophers before his time asserted that the world was made by a Supreme Being; and consequently that they believed in the existence of an intelligent Creator and Governor of all things. Yet, after his time, we know that the most thorough scepticism in regard to this fundamental doctrine of all religion was entertained by men of science and letters. From prudential considerations, they attempted to conceal from the multitude the real nature and tendency of their atheistical schemes, by pretending a regard for the gods and for their worship; but the covering was so transparent, that the imposition could not have succeeded, had not the people been immersed in inconceivable ignorance.

When the Romans imported the philosophy of Greece, they, at the same time, imported the scepticism and atheism that attended it. Intent upon conquest and military glory in the earlier periods of their history, they remained unacquainted with science till near the decline of the consular government. While their greatest men employed their powers, not in speculation, but in studying the arts of war, they probably

never questioned the divine origin of their worship, and considered themselves bound to yield a conscientious obedience to the civil and religious institutions of their country. During the first hundred and seventy years of the Commonwealth, they strictly observed the law of Numa, which forbade them to make any image or statue of the divine Being in the form of man or beast,—and taught them that it is impious to represent things divine by what is perishable, and that we can have no conception of God but by the understanding*. But in proportion as they became a literary people by their intercourse with the Greeks, were their idol deities indefinitely multiplied, and their learned men atheistical in their opinions, and immoral in their practice. “Professing themselves to be wise they became fools,” and were instrumental by their tenets and by their example “in changing the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.”

But it will be said, that there were philosophers both in Greece and Rome of juster views, and a purer character,—who entertained the sublimest sentiments concerning the being, attributes, and providence of God. It can be shewn, however, that they, in place of enlightening and improving the people, gave the sanction of their example, and their names, in confirmation of the established idolatry;—and so mingled truth and error together, as to become the efficient supporters and advocates of idol worship. The most enlightened of them, not excepting even

* Plutarch in Numa.

Socrates, spoke of the Divinity, and that to their disciples, when we should expect the greatest accuracy, in the plural form:—they represented the gods as the creators, preservers, and benefactors of mankind,—as seeing and hearing all things, and as being everywhere present:—and thus, I think, clearly prove, that they understood the Divine nature to be peculiar and appropriate, not to one god only, but to many gods, who in common possessed it, and to whom the titles and the characters of the Divinity belong.

Their views of the Divinity, besides, were such as could not fail to encourage, if not apparently to justify, the people in giving religious worship to a multitude of gods. Without alluding to all their erroneous opinions on this subject, there was one, which, more than any other, seemed to make idolatry a duty, and furnished the most plausible arguments in its favour,—namely, that the soul of the world is God. This opinion was very general among the Heathen philosophers, and was the chief ground of the polytheism of the whole Pagan world; concluding, as they did, that because God was all things, and all things God, he ought to be worshipped in all the parts and objects of nature. The Stoics, in particular, were most strenuous supporters of this tenet,—maintaining that the mind which governs the world passeth through every part of it, as the soul doth in us; or, as the poet has expressed it,—

All are but parts of one stupendous whole,
Whose body nature is, and God the soul;
That chang'd through all, and yet in all the same,
Great in the earth as in the ethereal flame;

**Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glow in the stars, and blossoms in the trees ;
Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent *.**

In conformity with this doctrine, we find some of the Stoics, after proving the existence and providence of God, from the beauty and order of the works that are made, gravely maintaining that the world is an animal,—reasonable, wise, and happy, and therefore is God. On this principle, whatever parts of the universe they chose to deify, were parts of God, and therefore entitled to religious worship. They themselves also, and their fellow-creatures, were parts of the divinity, a notion which tended to produce that pride and self-sufficiency for which the Stoics were so highly distinguished. On this absurd, but, to minds darkened and vain in their imaginations most plausible, ground, did the wisest and the best philosophers of antiquity advocate the system of polytheism and idol worship—a system which is so totally at variance with what we deem the light of nature, which was composed of rites, foolish, indecent, and cruel, and which sanctioned the grossest licentiousness and immorality. Need we wonder that an apostle should think it necessary to caution the disciples of christianity to beware lest any man should spoil them through philosophy and vain deceit?

The history of the ancient world does not furnish us with a single example of a philosopher who at-

* I am far from wishing to bring against the poet the charge of Spinozism and Pantheism. I have quoted his lines, because they are susceptible of furnishing an illustration of the doctrine of the *Anima Mundi* to those who are unacquainted with it. See Note B.

tempted to turn men from the worship of images, statues, and dumb idols, to that of the living and true God. The accusation with which Socrates was charged, and which led to his condemnation and death, was not, that he dissuaded the people from worshipping the gods appointed by law, but that he himself did not esteem those to be gods which the city of Athens regarded as such, and that he introduced other new gods. It is mortifying to relate, that this great man on the day of his death, alluded to a hymn which he had composed in his prison-house to the idol Apollo. The doctrine which he and all other philosophers held, was, that all men should worship the gods of their respective countries: nor did they forget to reduce this maxim to practice, when they assumed the character of legislators, by prescribing to the people the giving of religious homage to a multitude of deities. When we remember that every man in those times who had any pretensions to letters, in all the ranks and offices of life, whether in the senate or at the bar, in the army or upon the throne, was a disciple of one of the philosophical sects, and, consequently, the advocate for the established system of polytheism and idolatry,—that this system was interwoven with the civil constitution of every government in the world but one, and, therefore, had the power of the prince and the magistrate in its support,—that it had the aid and the influence of a priesthood that was neither unconcerned nor disinterested as to its continuance,—and that the whole of mankind were its auxiliaries in the feelings of veneration for that supposed sanctity which it awakened, and in the base and potent passions for which it fur-

nished gratification, we may form some feeble conception of the extent of that darkness that covered the earth when our Lord appeared, and of the gross darkness that covered the people. Yet, it was against this system, advocated by philosophers, entwined around the throne of princes, authorized by the laws, enforced by the magistrate, venerable from age, captivating to the senses, and having in its favour the full flow of public opinion, that the apostles of Christ went forth, unpatronised, unprotected, with no power to shield them but that of God, with no advantages, but the endowments of the Holy Spirit, with no weapon but eternal truth, and with no less an aim than the entire subversion of idolatry over the world, by turning men from darkness to light, and from the dominion of Satan to the service of the living and true God. Their success proves that they were in reality what they professed to be,—the servants of the Most High God, commissioned to shew unto men the way of salvation.

SECTION V.—*The Inexcusableness of Mankind in becoming, and in remaining, Idolaters.*

This is repeatedly intimated by the Apostle Paul; and their inexcusableness is stated as the ground of their having been given up to judicial blindness and insensibility. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them; so that they are without excuse. Their inexcusableness appears from the advantages which all mankind derived from the early revelation which

God made concerning himself, and the way in which he is to be worshipped ; from the manifold attestations of his being, perfections, and providence which the constitution of nature, and the order and government of the world, afford ; and from the standing memorial of the character and majesty of the living God, exhibited to the nations in the selection and distinct preservation of the Jewish people, in the enjoyment of his ordinances and laws. On these grounds it can be proved, that at no time did God leave himself without a witness ; that the apostasy of mankind, from the knowledge and worship of God to polytheism and idolatry, arose from the alienation and corruption of the heart ; and that as it was wilful, it was therefore most culpable.

They had advantages from the early revelation which God made of himself, and of the way in which he is to be worshipped. After the fall there was a series of divine communications made to Adam, and Noah, and others, the full benefit of which the whole human race enjoyed previously to their dispersion over the globe. In these communications the elements of what afterwards was more fully revealed were made known to them,—the holiness and mercy of God ; the fallen and guilty condition of man ; the forgiveness and reconciliation with God which they might obtain ; the way of salvation through that great Deliverer, styled “ the seed of the woman,” who should come into the world to redeem them ; and the efficacy of his death, typified by the institution of sacrifice. These principles of divine truth the family of mankind carried with them when they separated on the plains of

Shinar, and went forth on the right and on the left to inhabit that earth which the bounty of the Creator had given them. It would then be their duty, and doubtless many performed it, to transmit the knowledge of divine things thus obtained to their posterity, that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children; that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments. The impression of them would be cherished with delight and studious diligence by all who had any sense of their value; and through them the way of salvation would be made known in regions where the written record of the will of God may not yet have reached.

These impressions should have been maintained, if not deepened, by the legible characters of power, wisdom, and goodness, exhibited in the works of creation, and in the order of providence. That the consideration of these works, and of this order, suggests the idea of the universal presence, and the boundless benignity of the Lord and sovereign Ruler of all, has scarcely ever been disputed, and cannot be denied. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth forth his handy work." The constitution of man, in his corporeal and mental frame, without proceeding to the examination of the earth, the elements, and the lower animals, affords numerous and ever-recurring proofs that the Almighty Maker is infinite in intelligence, and that there is no searching of his understanding. The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly

seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead.

In addition to these advantages, which were conferred on the whole family of mankind for preserving them in the knowledge, fear, and worship of God, the Lord, in separating the Jewish people, and in continuing, during a series of ages, to make discoveries of his character and will, gave another preservative from idolatry. Placed by divine Providence in the centre of the habitable globe, the light with which they were favoured was designed to issue forth from them, and illuminate the world. Their constitution, laws, ordinances, and worship, were framed so as to lead them to the acknowledgment and adoration of the living and true God, and of him only. They had, besides, for upwards of a thousand years, a succession of prophets, inspired by God, and qualified to act under his authority, in giving clear revelations of his will, in arousing the attention of the people to his providence and care, and in conveying instructions, reproofs, remonstrances, and denunciations. Their inspiration was proved, and their mission accredited, by miraculous displays of the power and glory of God. That the human race might derive *some advantage* at least from their divine communications, the people to whom they were immediately addressed were not only in a central situation, and in direct contact with the great empires of the world, but were also in the neighbourhood of Tyre and Sidon, the emporiums of the earth, whose ships went to the most distant countries. The peculiarity of their government and worship, and of those laws by which

they were kept distinct from other nations, as well as of that special providence which made them the object of its care, could not fail to make them the general subject of notice, of remark, and of inquiry.

Besides, though for important ends they were kept distinct from other nations, they had frequent intercourse with them, and were required to receive all who would consent to forsake idolatry, and worship the living and true God. To shew that a leading design of all that God had done for them was to spread the knowledge of God over the earth, Solomon, in the dedication of the temple, alludes to this effect. "Concerning a stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake; for they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm; when he shall come and pray toward this house, hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house which I have builded is called by thy name*." Their correspondence with foreigners was extensive in the reign of Solomon, whose wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. "And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of this wisdom†." These illustrious foreigners would be instructed while at Jerusalem in the law of God, and would carry with

* 2 Chron. vi. 32, 33.

† 1 Kings x. 24. 2 Chron. ix. 23.

them to their respective countries the knowledge of God as the Creator and Preserver of the world, and the moral Governor and Judge of all men.

To ensure the extended dissemination of this knowledge, Israel and Judah were sent into captivity; and lived during many years around the metropolis, and some of them in the palace, of that mighty monarch, whose empire reached over the greatest portion of the habitable globe. That their residence, during their captivity, in Babylon and Assyria was not in vain, we learn from the language in which the decrees of Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, Cyrus, and Artaxerxes, kings of Persia, are couched, in which they acknowledge the God of Israel to be the God of the whole earth, whose dominion is over all, and who doth among the armies of heaven, and the inhabitants of the world, that which seemeth good in his sight. After the return of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin to Jerusalem, many thousands of all the tribes of Israel remained in a state of dispersion over the globe, and were in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass. A Jewish historian affirms, that there were not less than a million of them in Alexandria and in other parts of Egypt, where, by the favour of Alexander the Great, they enjoyed many privileges and immunities, were allowed to be governed by their own laws, and to exhibit, in the midst of idolaters, the character, the worship, and the ordinances of the living God; and that their religious advantages might be more generally and effectually shared by the whole family of men, a translation was made of

the sacred scriptures into the Greek, then the language of the civilized world, about two hundred years before the christian æra. We are informed by authentic history, that the Jews about that period, and subsequent to it, were dispersed in all lands, so that there was not a people upon earth which had not some portion of their nation among them.

So numerous and varied were the means which God employed for bearing witness to his own being and perfections, and for preserving mankind in the knowledge and worship of himself. In all the ways which have been mentioned is the Apostle's statement confirmed—that that which may be known of God was manifest in them; for God had shewed it unto them. They could not plead ignorance, then, as an apology for their idolatry; for they enjoyed many means of obtaining divine knowledge, and of being convinced of the folly and deep criminality of worshipping and serving the creature to the neglect of the Creator. In their idolatry and immorality they acted in direct opposition to the law written on the heart, to the light of nature, and to the numerous revelations which God gave of himself, and of his will, and of which they ought not to have been ignorant. They were therefore without excuse, and merited the judicial blindness to which they were given up, and that wrath from heaven which is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

We learn from this subject, in the first place, the deep depravity and guilt of mankind. These are the source of that polytheism and idolatry, that impiety and immorality, which so nearly covered the world. To

see a being who has been formed in the image of God, with capacities and powers by which he is fitted to know, love, worship, and serve the glorious Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of all, pay religious homage to cats, dogs, reptiles, to blocks of wood and of stone, to the stars of heaven, to the earth or the elements, is surely the most humbling spectacle that can be witnessed, and shews the length to which fallen man has departed from the fountain of light, and truth, and blessedness. Yet of this practice, and during many ages, nearly all mankind were guilty---the enlightened and the illiterate, kings, heroes, philosophers, and all ranks of the people. They persisted in it, notwithstanding the numerous intimations that were given them of the folly and criminality of their conduct, and proved how willingly they alienated their hearts, their thoughts, their worship and obedience, from the God of all perfection. They lived dishonouring him, as if he were not, and were without him in the world. How wonderful the goodness and the patience of God, who ceased not to shower down his blessings on an apostate and rebellious race, and to give them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness ! It was in this condition of impiety, of guilt, and moral ruin, that mankind were placed, at the very time when a Divine Messenger from heaven announced to the inhabitants of Palestine those heart-cheering and memorable words, " God so loved the world, as to give his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For, God sent not his Son into

the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved."

We learn from this subject, in the second place, the necessity of Divine Revelation, and of that great salvation from sin and death which it brings to light. The actual condition of mankind, wherever the light of revelation is not enjoyed, affords incontestible proof of this. This condition, as we have seen, is as hopeless as it is helpless. The aid of mere man, of the wisest, the best, and the most exalted of men, was proved to be vain. The light of reason and of nature, in regard to religion, was hid by the gross and palpable darkness in which all were enveloped. A race of immortals were living without any certain knowledge of their immortality; and beings formed for finding happiness in God, as the chief good, were all wandering from him, and in the consciousness of their guilt and misery, all crying, who will shew us any good? How necessary was it, then, if mankind were ever delivered from this condition, that God should interpose, return again in kindness and compassion to the world that had forsaken him, and dispel the thick gloom that covered it by the glorious brightness of the manifestation of himself!

He hath done so: he has sent his Son to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of his people Israel." He has wrought out, by his obedience and death, a great salvation for us, and as the consequence, invites all men to return to him, assuring them of his readiness to pardon, and that he is in Christ Jesus reconciling the world to himself, and not

imputing unto men their trespasses. "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined." Wherever the revelation from heaven goes, may we address the favoured inhabitants—"Arise, shine, for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you."

In the third place, we learn from this subject, that if idolaters were inexcusable under the light of nature, much more inexcusable are idolaters under the light of the Gospel. And yet, as early as the fifth and sixth centuries were efforts made to revive and re-establish the idolatrous system. I need not speak of the attempts of the Emperor Julian, who had been educated in the christian religion, but who afterwards apostatized from it, and who employed his learning, his talents, his artifices, and his power, for suppressing the doctrine of Christ, and re-establishing the ancient idolatry. Nor need I say, that in the beginning of the eighth century the Pope of Rome ordained by law that idolatrous worship should be offered throughout the papal dominions. Hence the bloody and continued persecutions which assailed those who refused to acknowledge a system which is as much opposed to the light of nature, as it is to the light of the Gospel. Hence the difficulties, the cruelties, the imprisonment and death, which the reformers from popery had to encounter all over Europe, and in no country more violently than in our native land. Often in cold, and in multiplied necessities and distresses, did they meet on the sides of the mountains, and under the vault of heaven, to hear the word of God, and to convey

to their posterity the heritage of God's testimonies. Through tears, and at the expense of their blood, that heritage has reached us, and we enjoy the blessedness of the people who know the joyful sound. Let us value our inestimable privileges, and not yield to an idolatrous and antichristian church that has fundamentally departed from the doctrines of the Prophets and the Apostles—that has blasphemously assumed to itself the prerogatives of God,—that still places itself in direct and avowed opposition to the light and the circulation of the gospel,—and that inculcates, with all its might and its authority, the worship of images. Let us keep ourselves from idols, and thus shew our gratitude to God, and to the great and good men, on the fruits of whose labours and sufferings we have entered. “Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free, and be no more entangled with the yoke of bondage.” Let us give the supreme love of our hearts, our worship, and obedience, to the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whose tender mercy the “day-spring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

CHAPTER VII.

HUMILITY.

THE duty which is by implication enjoined in the third commandment, is the reverence of God ; and the sin prohibited is the opposite of this duty,—impiety, and profaneness. The exercise of reverence of the divine character and perfections is essentially connected with the love of God. It is awakened in the mind by the contemplation of the attributes and works of the Almighty. Humility is its kindred affection, and is produced by a just estimate of ourselves, of our condition and attainments. We shall, therefore, proceed to a consideration of the nature of humility, which may be placed among the duties we owe to God, since without it there can be no true reverence of his character.

Humility is a relative term, and implies a comparison of ourselves with objects above us. It proceeds from a just estimate of our own condition and character as dependent, weak, and sinful creatures. Does pride become the highest created being, who depends every moment on Him whose nature and perfections are infinitely removed from him? Far less does it become man, whose foundation is in the dust, whose path, though it should conduct him to wealth, and rank, and honour, speedily terminates in the grave. What is he in relation to God? A sinner, a rebel against the authority of heaven, against whom the sentence is

passed, "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return:" so that he may say to corruption, "Thou art my father; and to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister."

When we consider the character, condition, and attainments of men, we see much ground for lowliness of mind, but none for pride. Are we not entirely dependent upon God and upon one another for the blessings and enjoyments of human life? What elevation of rank, what accumulation of property, can exempt men from a dependence, for much of their daily comfort, on their fellow-creatures? Or, are our attainments in knowledge and virtue such as should inspire us with self-gratulation? How deplorable has been the condition of mankind in all ages, when destitute of the light of revelation! How profound has been their ignorance concerning things the most necessary, and things the most awfully important! They have lived without God, worshipped the host of heaven, have deified their fellow-creatures, and even the most loathsome reptiles: and even where the light of truth shines, how reluctant are human beings to admit it, and to put off the works of darkness, and to walk as children of light! They are most sinful and rebellious in regard to God, they are often deceitful, slanderous, envious, and oppressive in regard to one another, and they are, in regard to themselves, foolish, enslaved, and miserable. The termination of this career of folly and guilt, in so far as this world is concerned, is the grave.

Surely, then, the man who takes a just view of his character and condition;—of his character as a violator

of the law of God, and as meriting his displeasure,—as prone to error and to sin, and, therefore, to the neglect of the means of his true happiness; and of his condition in all its relations to God, to his fellow-creatures, to eternity, and to himself, must feel his own unworthiness and nothingness, and, consequently, must be humble. When he looks to the purity of that God whose love should regulate every feeling of his heart, and to the extent and the authority of that law of which he is the subject, and compares with this the tenor of his thoughts and of his life, can any other feeling arise in his heart than that of the man; “who, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner!”

The arrogance which leads a being who depends every moment for his health, his reason, his comfort, his existence, on the will of another, and who can by no artifices clear himself, even to his own satisfaction, from the charge of sin, to say to his fellow-creatures, “Stand by, for I am holier than thou,” is, indeed, founded on extreme ignorance, as it is on presumption. This arrogance, which is so natural to man, and which he is so apt to cherish from the most trifling circumstances,—circumstances which distinguish him from those who are lower than himself, not in moral worth, but in external rank and situation in society; is reprehended in language of peculiar severity by our Lord, and represented as forming a barrier to an entrance into the kingdom of heaven.

Christian humility is recommended to us by many considerations,—by its being pleasing to God,—by

its prominence in the character of that Redeemer whose example we are to follow,—by the necessary part which it forms in the foundation of all real excellence,—by its being indispensably requisite to the faithful discharge of all our duties,—and by its being the only character that in truth accords with our condition.

I. Humility is pleasing to God. He is pleased with it as the invariable accompaniment and indication, or, rather, as forming a part, of that holiness which is the reflection of his own moral excellences. “Be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.” “Thus saith the High and Lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” It is they only that he can view with favour and approbation, who think justly of him and of themselves; who feel deeply their own sinfulness, and the greatness of his mercy; and who look to him, not as if they had a claim of right to acceptance before him, but as hoping that he may grant them forgiveness. This disposition, produced, as it always is, by a view of the character of God, is itself the germ of all the excellence to which man can ever attain; and is so pleasing to the all-perfect and most glorious God, that he takes up his abode in the heart in which it has a place. He marks its possessor, amid outward obscurity and privation, as bearing in some degree that divine image in which man was originally formed; and he dwells with him as his God, to cheer, to sustain, and to save him.

II. Humility is further recommended to us by its prominence in the character of the Redeemer, whose example we are to follow. His condescension in undertaking and in finishing his mighty work is so great, that the mind is filled with admiration and astonishment. Is it possible that He who is declared to be the image of the invisible God, whose nature and attributes are divine, should leave the glories of heaven, should come down to a world of revolt and misery, should appear among us in the form of man, should exercise a ministry of unwearied patience and compassion, should endure the contradiction of sinners, should be mocked, scourged, condemned, and crucified? This is indeed humbleness of mind that has no comparison, and the extent of which infinitely surpasses our comprehension:—yet it is proposed for our imitation in the measure of which we are capable. “Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem another better than himself. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

Mark the whole of his life, the circumstances in which he conducted his ministry, his condescension to suffering humanity in its varied forms, his compassion to the penitent, his readiness to succour and to save

even a dying malefactor, and we must see with what truth and propriety he describes himself as meek and lowly of heart. Can we in any degree be conformed to his image, or be entitled to the name of his disciples, without some of that humbleness of mind which marked his advent, his life, his ministry, and his death?

III. This virtue is further recommended, by the consideration that it is the necessary foundation of all real excellence. This is, indeed, so obvious, that it is become a common remark, that humility is the accompaniment of great intellectual and moral endowments; while pride is the characteristic of ignorance and superficial attainments. Would not the feeling of pride arrest the progress of an archangel in his bright and interminable career of improvement, and not only prevent him from reaching that height of moral glory which is before him, but cast him down, as it did the angels of light, into moral darkness and ruin? Who has ever risen to high excellence among men, who has not been remarkable for his humility?

Such a person must have lowly views of himself, just because he sees things as they are;—elevated above the horizon of others, he has a fuller discovery of the progress he has yet to make in knowledge, wisdom, and holiness;—and measuring himself by the standard of excellence on which he fixes his gaze, he feels the utter insignificance of his actual attainments. “It is in this way that the very religion which ennobles man, leads him not to pride, but to humility. It elevates him from the smoke and dust of earth; but it elevates him above the darkness, that

he may see better the great heights that are above him. It shews him, not the mere excellence of a few frail creatures, as fallible as himself, but excellence, the very conception of which is the highest effort that can be made by man; exhibiting thus constantly, what it will be the only honour worthy of his nature to imitate, however faintly,—and checking his momentary pride, at every step of his glorious progress, by the brightness and the vastness of what is still before him.

“ It is in this way we are to account for that humility which is so peculiarly a part of the christian character, as contrasted with the general pride which other systems either recommend or allow. The christian religion is, indeed, as has been often sarcastically said, by those who revile it, the religion of the humble in heart; but it is the religion of the humble, only because it presents to our contemplation a higher excellence than was ever before exhibited to man. The proud look down upon the earth, and see nothing that creeps upon its surface more noble than themselves. The humble look upward to their God*.”

He, then, who would make progress in excellence of any kind, but more especially in the excellences of christian virtue; who would appear fully arrayed in all the graces of the christian life, must be clothed with humility. He will not aim at the prize of his high-calling of God in Christ Jesus, unless he sensibly feels his deficiency, and that he has not yet attained, neither is already, perfect. The opportunities given

* Brown's Lectures on the Philos. of the Hum. Mind, vol. iii. p. 318.

him will be misimproved, the talents conferred will be neglected, and he will pass onwards to the end of life, proud and self-sufficient, and without those attainments by which alone human beings are qualified to take part in the society of the celestial world. To illustrate the necessity of this self-renunciation, this lowliness of heart, Jesus, when asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

IV. Humility is indispensably requisite to the discharge of our duties. Without it, how can we practise those which we owe to God? How can we obey his commandments, -without the entire subjection to his will and authority which is essential to all obedience? How can we believe his truth, under the influence of the pride of reason and of knowledge? How can we submit to his dispensations with lofty and unjust views of what is due to ourselves? How can we aspire to a higher conformity to the divine image, when we are so well satisfied with the degree of excellence which we have attained?

Nor, with the absence of this christian virtue, shall we be less deficient in our duties to our fellow-creatures. These should emanate from the love of benevolence, or of good will and compassion; but pride prevents the existence and operation of this affection, and incapacitates the mind from forming a

fair estimate of the rights of others. The proud man may be upright in his dealings, just because he is too proud to be otherwise ; but will he esteem others better than himself, and view their claims with the kindness and the candour which, by the law of love, and by the law of God, he is bound to do ? Does not pride give rise to implacable and revengeful feelings, and produce misery in families and in nations ?

As little is it possible, without humility, for a man to discharge aright the duties which he owes himself. How can he practise self-examination and true repentance ? How can he take heed to his immortal interests, when he is void of that state of mind by which he can value and pursue aright the redemption of the soul ?

V. Humility alone accords with our condition. Without alluding again to our dependence, helplessness, and sinfulness, I may notice that pride is unsuited to our absolute insignificance and ignorance. Of the parts, the structure, the designs of that universe in the midst of which we are placed, we know comparatively nothing. Yet even the traces of power, intelligence and wisdom, of power so vast, of wisdom so wonderful and unerring, observable throughout this work of God, are such as make us feel the very limited nature of our faculties, and the condescension of the great Lord and Ruler of all in consulting our happiness. “ When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained ; what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him ? ”

CHAPTER VIII.

REVERENCE OF GOD.

REVERENCE of God is that state of mind which is naturally produced by a view of his greatness and majesty, as infinitely powerful, wise, holy, just, and good; and is to be distinguished from that servile tormenting fear which is the accompaniment of despair. The reverence of which I speak, is a filial affection, involved in the exercise of that love which is the fulfilling of the law, and proceeding from just conceptions of the character of God, as a Being of boundless purity and justice, as well as of mercy and goodness. It is to be exercised in regard to his titles, his attributes, his word, his ordinances, his works, and every thing by which he makes known his character and will.

That this affection is involved in the exercise of love to God, and forms an essential element in the formation of a virtuous character, must be apparent from a slight consideration of the nature of God and the nature of man, and the relations which the one bears to the other. What intelligent being, however exalted, can contemplate the awful perfections of Him whose glories no eye hath fully seen, or can see, without the deepest awe? The seraphim are represented as covering their faces with their wings, as they stand in the posture of humility and reverence before his throne, and respond one to another, saying,

“ Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory.” Is it not meet that man, so weak and sinful, should habitually entertain the same holy fear in reference to God, in his character, perfections, and government? Is it possible for him to have just apprehensions of God, in the perfection of his character, as glorious in holiness, as well as rich in mercy, and, at the same time, not to be awed by his presence, nor to feel reverence and godly fear in regard to him? Or, is it desirable that a being, so forgetful as man is of the high and holy ends of his existence, should ever be freed, even were it possible, from the fear of that God who is, indeed, his father, but who is also his supreme moral governor and judge?

So closely allied is the fear of God to the love of God, that the one, and especially in the Old Testament, is put for the other, and is used frequently to denote that moral and religious character which is the object of divine approbation. “ Happy is the man that feareth alway: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief. I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. The fear of the Lord is a fountain of life.” In the New Testament, the exercise of mind implied in this expression is repeatedly mentioned as essential to the Christian character. “ Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. Having, there-

fore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

From these, and many similar passages, it appears that the fear or reverence of God enjoined, is an affection of mind totally different from painful apprehension and desponding dread;—that it is essential to true and acceptable worship;—that it is not only conducive, but necessary to true obedience and progressive holiness;—that it is not only compatible with the highest delight and confidence of God in this world, but essential to the glory and happiness of heaven;—and that it is the source of true fidelity and fortitude, and the evidence of real piety.

I. It is an affection of mind totally different from painful apprehension and desponding dread. The object of fear to sinful mortals is often, at the same time, the object of hatred. A successful and powerful rival is sometimes disliked while he is feared. When the awful perfections of God are contemplated without love to his character, the feelings excited are alienation and dread. It is thus that *they* are affected, who are said to believe in God and tremble.

Nor is the fear of the sinner, when first awakened to behold the majesty of God, and to a sense of his guilt, free from painful apprehensions. His view, however imperfect, of the power, wisdom, and especially of the holiness of God, of the rectitude of his moral government, of the authority of his law, and of his own transgressions, suggests to him guilt which he has incurred, concerns of awful moment which he has neglected, and the just displeasure of the great

and holy Lord God as the consequence. Under this feeling, Paul the prisoner, as he reasoned concerning righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, made Felix, his judge, tremble. Under the influence of the same emotion has the question often been asked, "What shall I do to be saved?" It is easy to see why, in fallen and guilty beings, this species of fear should precede filial reverence. It does not always nor necessarily issue in this holy affection; but it does so in every case in which it leads to true repentance, and the love and the obedience of God.

That godly fear, which we style the reverence of God, in place of having any thing in it of alienation and distrust, is inseparably connected with delight in his greatness and glory, with the most earnest desire to please him, and with a willing subjection to his authority. This pleasing, solemn awe is felt when his character is contemplated by all who truly love him;—it is felt in the survey of whatever brings his glorious perfections to the view of the mind,—in looking to the heavens which declare his glory, and to the firmament which sheweth forth his handy-work; to the intelligence, power, wisdom, and goodness, which the beauty, order, and magnificence of nature, so impressively disclose;—to the operation of his vital presence in the wonders of his providential government;—to his word, which so much more fully, and under far more endearing characters, reveals him;—and in the observance of the instituted ordinances of his worship, in which we are said to draw near unto God. In a word, when God, in his character, his works, and his ways, is the object of our contemplation, it must be

as natural for us to think of Him with the profoundest reverence, if our hearts be right with him, as it is for a dutiful child to respect an aged and venerable parent. Nor can we refrain from feeling what is uttered in the language of heaven, "Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy."

II. Reverence of the character and perfections of God is essential to true and acceptable worship. The mind, indeed, is not fit to draw near to God, and to offer him the homage which is suited to his nature and attributes, unless it is affected with solemn awe in his presence. Unless the worshipper is thus affected, his worship is neither profitable to himself nor pleasing to God. "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified." Wherefore, saith the Apostle, "Let us have grace, whereby we may serve him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear; for our God is a consuming fire." "As for me," says the Psalmist, "I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercies; and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple." Nor should we here forget that remarkable passage of the Prophet Isaiah, in which God, after alluding to his own majesty and glory, promises his peculiar favour to the fearer of his name and of his law. "Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me, and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and *trembleth* at my word."

To worship God with reverence is to think of him, and to address him, with awe of the power that has given being to all things, and which can create and can destroy,—of the boundless wisdom that designed the work of creation, and the nobler work of human redemption,—of the goodness which is over all his works, and which supplies the wants of every living thing,—of the patience which endures with much long-suffering the provocations of the wicked, and which gives to the children of disobedience time for repentance,—of the mercy that pardons the penitent, but that pardons him through an atonement of infinite value. Nor is it possible for this profound awe to be absent from the mind in our approaches unto God, did we think aright of the greatness and the spotless purity of Him who fills heaven and earth with his presence, and of the myriads of exalted spirits who continually minister before him, and celebrate his glories. Were the vision opened up to the eye of our faith, and could we see, however dimly, the glories of the King eternal, immortal, and invisible, we should wonder at His condescension, and be ready to exclaim with the deepest humility and reverence, Will God in very deed dwell with men upon the earth?

III. It is not only conducive, but essentially necessary to true obedience, and to progressive holiness. The great motive to obedience to the will of God, and that without which all others would be of no avail, is love: but love, even when perfect, though it casts out the fear that hath torment, implies and requires the reverential fear of God. This latter principle possesses a power that adapts it to our nature and

circumstances, and is necessary to impel us forward with zeal and watchfulness in the path of righteousness. Hence the terms in which Solomon sums up the conclusion of the whole matter: "Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is all that concerneth man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Here the inspired writer assumes, that the fear of God established in the heart, would operate as a preventive to sloth, impiety, and unrighteousness, and would prompt to an universal obedience to the commandments.

The light in which God makes himself known to us in the Scriptures, is well calculated to awe as well as to cheer the soul. He has shewn himself to be the God of love; but he has given a demonstration at the same time of his holiness and justice. It is affirmed, of the same glorious God that he delighteth in mercy, and that his wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; that he is a consuming fire, and that it is a fearful thing to fall into his hands. Is not this combination of character harmoniously displayed in the Cross of Christ? Do we not there behold free and unbounded mercy to the sinner, and unsparing wrath against sin, eternal love bestowing an unspeakable gift, and justice by the most awful infliction vindicating its honour?

Hence the union of fear and love in the mind of every believer,—an union which is maintained by every view of the divine character, by the promises and threatenings, the invitations and warnings, of the Holy Scriptures,—and an union which exerts a happy

influence in keeping in continued exercise all the christian graces, and producing all those apparently opposite dispositions which characterize the humble, watchful, self-diffident, resigned, and spiritually-minded disciple of Christ. He is reminded, that while his sin is pardoned, its wages is death ; that this death was inflicted in all its bitterness on that divine person who obeyed and suffered in his room ; and that in no way can he escape final condemnation, but by continuing in the faith and holiness of the gospel to the end. At every period, even the most advanced of his course, is the caution applicable : if we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

Not only is the whole scheme of divine truth thus adapted to inspire and to keep alive in the mind a godly fear, but the representations which are given of the righteous and the wicked, shew its necessity, to continued and progressive obedience. Of the latter, it is said, that they have not the fear of God before their eyes ; of the former, that they fear God, and eschew evil. What is the character given of the unjust judge, who neglected the duties of his office ? That he feared not God, nor regarded man. Obadiah, that benevolent and heroic individual, who hid a hundred and fifty of the prophets of the Lord from the persecuting Jezebel, is described as one that feared the Lord greatly. If, in a word, this principle were to be removed from the mind, we cease to be safe, whatever were our previous attainments, just because we cease

to be watchful, and zealously concerned to stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.

IV. Godly fear is not only compatible with the highest delight and confidence in God, but is so essential to the holiness of a dependent being, that it will abide for ever in heaven. That the first part of this proposition, namely, its compatibility with the highest delight and confidence in God, is true, is proved by the abundant testimony of revelation. How elevated are the strains in which the Psalmist expresses his joy and confidence in God; and yet it is in the Book of Psalms that we are commanded to serve the Lord with fear, and to rejoice with trembling. None of the inspired writers seem farther removed beyond the experience of ordinary Christians, in the liveliness with which he anticipated heavenly felicity, and in the lofty and unqualified terms in which he speaks of the assurance of his hope than the Apostle Paul; and yet he unites himself with his fellow-disciples when he addresses them in the language of caution, "Let us, therefore, fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.—I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest, that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."

That reverence of the character of God animates all pure beings throughout the universe, and will continue for ever with the worshippers of heaven, is a position which, after the observations already made, requires no proof. This reverence will become more profound by every additional discovery of the glory of God. While the manifestation of his awful Ma-

jesty will fill the wicked with terror, it will be viewed with love, as well as with holy fear, by the pure inhabitants of the celestial world.

V. The fear of God is the only source of true fortitude. While the fear of man brings a snare, and incapacitates for the firm and faithful discharge of duty, the fear of God inspires us with intrepidity, and makes us fearless of danger and of death, so that we win his favour. With this principle fixed in the heart, we estimate things according to their true value, and justly conclude, that it will profit us nothing, though we should gain the whole world, were we to acquire it with his frown, on whose judgment our being and our happiness depend. “I say unto you, my friends, be not afraid of them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do: but I will forewarn you whom you shall fear, fear him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell: I say unto you, fear Him.”

CHAPTER IX.

ON THE NATURE AND GUILT OF IMPIETY.

THE sin prohibited in the third commandment, is the vice opposed to reverence of God, or impiety and profanation. “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.”

Numerous are the ways in which impiety is shewn, and this command violated. It is impious to use the name of God lightly or irreverently, and without necessity. All the forms of cursing and swearing in common language, are, therefore, obvious indications of a profane mind. Perjury, or false swearing, because the person guilty of it is usually more deliberate in its commission, is impiety in its most aggravated and awful extent. It is to be feared, that when oaths are so frequently required, as the laws of most nations demand, this crime, so insulting to the omniscience and omnipresence of God, is often committed.

This command is also violated, when God is not seen nor glorified in his works ; and when, in place of being referred to his power, and wisdom, and goodness, they are vilified, and ascribed to chance or fate. The mind that can survey the glories of heaven, and the ever-varying and stupendous works of that universe in the midst of which we are placed, without the profoundest reverence for that eternal God who is the author, the mover, and the preserver of all, may, indeed, be charged with a feeling, if not impious, at least closely akin to it.

But the word of God is that in which he has more clearly and fully displayed his character, perfections, and purposes. It particularly reveals the plan of redeeming love and mercy, through the atoning sacrifice of Christ. This word, therefore, he has magnified above all his name ; that is, it is a richer discovery of himself, and of his ways, than is elsewhere to be seen in his works ; and so highly does he value

it, that he fulfils all that it announces, that he is pleased with the reverential mind of him who trembles at it, and that heaven and earth shall sooner pass away than that one jot, or one tittle of it, shall fail.

But how is this word treated and entertained by multitudes of those to whom it is sent? Numbers not only reject it, but reject it with derision and scorn. How often is it made the subject of jest, and introduced in conversation, and in writing, for the purpose of exciting a laugh! Others impiously lay it aside as unworthy of their study, and conduct themselves towards it as if it were not certain truth, as if it revealed not things of the very deepest concernment, as if it were all a cunningly-devised fable, without authority and without foundation. Should such persons attend the instituted ordinances of divine worship, they carry their irreverence along with them, and feel not awed by the majesty of His presence who is the object of worship, nor concerned to draw near unto him with that state of mind in which a creature, and more especially a sinful creature, should approach unto God.

The aggravation of this sin is, that it is a direct attack upon God: it is known rebellion against his authority. His name, his titles, his dispensations, his laws, his word, his day, are lightly treated and abused, because they are God's. Has not the Lord said, that he will not hold them guiltless who are chargeable with this crime? May they not expect to be visited by Him with the punishment they deserve, and to be hereafter held up to shame, and to everlasting contempt?

How often are they who are guilty of this vice, left in this life to the hardening influence of sin,—to be the corrupters of those with whom they may associate,—to the judgments of God here, and to a still more fearful punishment hereafter? Shun it, and those who practise it, as you would the pestilence, as you would the greatest calamity that can befall you; shun it as you value the peace of your own minds; and if you have a remaining wish to revere the awful Majesty of heaven, remember that there is a period approaching that will make us all feel deeply serious, and when we shall wish to call on that holy name which thousands so irreverently take upon their lips.

“Infidelity,” says Paley, “is served up in every shape that is likely to allure, surprise, or beguile the imagination; in a fable, a tale, a novel, a poem; in interspersed and broken hints, remote and oblique surmises; in books of travels, of philosophy, of natural history; in a word, in any form rather than the right one,—that of a professed and regular disquisition. And because the coarse buffoonery, and broad laugh, of the old and rude adversaries of the Christian faith, would offend the taste, perhaps, rather than the virtue of this enlightened age, a graver irony, a more skilful and delicate banter, is substituted in their place. An eloquent historian, beside his more direct, and therefore fairer, attacks upon the credibility of the Evangelical story, has contrived to weave into his narration one continued sneer upon the cause of christianity, and upon the writings and characters of its ancient patrons. The knowledge which this author possesses of the frame and conduct of the

human mind, must have led him to observe, that such attacks do their execution without inquiry. Who can refute a *sneer*? Who can compute the number, much less, one by one, scrutinize the justice of those disparaging insinuations, which crowd the page of this elaborate historian? What reader suspends his curiosity, or calls off his attention from the principal narrative, to examine references, to search into the foundation, or to weigh the reason, propriety, and force, of every transient sarcasm and sly allusion, by which the Christian testimony is depreciated and traduced; and by which, nevertheless, he may find his persuasion afterwards unsettled and perplexed *?"

CHAPTER X.

ON VOWS.

THIS may be the proper place for shortly inquiring into the nature and lawfulness of engagements or vows made unto God.

It is scarcely necessary to premise, that the right of God to command the love and obedience of his intelligent creatures, does not rest on any stipulation on their part to yield what he requires. This arises from the infinite excellency of his nature, and is commensurate with that excellency,—and from the relations he bears to us, as Creator, Preserver, and Moral Governor. The obligation of obeying a Being who is

* Mor. Phil. v. ii. p. 104.

thus infinite in worth, and who is the source of all that is estimable, and all that is desirable in the universe, begins with the commencement of intelligent and moral existence, and only ceases with the extinction of this existence.

Nor is the obligation which thus necessarily accompanies such an existence diminished or altered, by our not acknowledging it ; or by our refusing to recognise it. Were this the case, the more wicked and wilful in wickedness any one would become, the less would he be bound to obey the will of God : so that the conduct of those angels who kept not their first estate would be less sinful than that of man. The obligations to give to God the supreme love of the heart, and to do his commandments, are unalterable ; and though their force may be increased by the continued multiplication of mercies, they cannot be dissolved by our ceasing to recognise them.

Yet, such a solemn recognition of our obligations to love and serve God, as deeply affects the heart,—such a recognition as implies that our consent is given, and that our seal and signature are appended, is acceptable to God, and may be profitable to us. The three following may be mentioned as obvious advantages which result from such a transaction.

I. We are thus called to survey our obligations, and to deepen their impression on the heart. As often as Israel were led to renew their engagements to be the Lord's, the character and perfections of God were set forth before them, and they were reminded of the goodness and truth which he had shewn them. Such an exercise is calculated to be profitable to beings

who are so prone to forget the God that made them, and lightly to esteem the rock of their salvation. All have need of frequently recalling to their minds the obligations by which they are bound to glorify God, and of recounting the mercies by which he is calling them to the love of himself and of holiness. Will not such a review bring their failures in duty to light, tend to cherish the feelings of repentance, and be productive of resolutions of new obedience?

II. In solemnly recognising our obligations to love and serve God; that is, in entering, as it were, into covenant with God, our faculties as moral and accountable agents are exercised. We voluntarily bind ourselves to fulfil those obligations which devolve upon us as the creatures and as the servants of God; and we thus declare, that we consider his law to be holy, and just, and good. One of the most prominent parts of a vow or engagement made to God, and that which renders it pleasing to the eye of christian contemplation, is, that it is voluntary,—a voluntary recognition of all that is great and holy in religion; of God, in his being and perfections, of his will as the only law, and of his glory as the ultimate end:—Our saying, not feignedly, but in sincerity and truth, “We choose thee, O God, as our only Lord and Ruler; as our God to adore, and love, and serve thee; and we voluntarily give ourselves up, with all that we are and have, to be employed in furthering thy glory.”

III. It may be the means of increasing our diligence and holiness. Prone as we are to forget our highest interests, is it not desirable to avail ourselves of every motive, consistent with the will of God, that

may stimulate us to a perseverance in well-doing? How often has the backslider been brought to repentance by reflecting on his own former professions and voluntary engagements? When every other consideration has failed to awaken the conscience, it has been found that the recollection of promises deliberately and solemnly made, has aroused from the stupor of sin, and has been the means of bringing the sinner to himself. If there be not, then, any thing in the nature of covenant engagements, at variance with the Scriptures, we must surely infer their expediency and lawfulness, from the salutary effects which they are so well calculated to produce.

But, it is alleged, by way of objection, that though such engagements were lawful under the Old Testament dispensation, they are not so under the New;—that it is voluntarily placing ourselves in circumstances in which we may contract guilt;—that the forming of covenant engagements is at variance with the self-diffidence and the deep humility which ought ever to be cherished;—and that by entering into them, many are chargeable with hypocrisy. Let us briefly consider these objections in their order.

I. It is alleged that covenant engagements, or vows, though they were lawful under the Old Testament dispensation, are not so under the New. That they were practised under the former economy by the most eminent servants of God, cannot be denied; and their lawfulness, therefore, must be assumed; but it is supposed that they are not so under the more spiritual institution of the Gospel.

In this objection, it is taken for granted, that there

is a greater difference between the two dispensations than there really is. Though different in the external administration, they are, as it regards the substance of religion and morals, essentially the same. The same way of salvation, which was then made known through the medium of types and sacrifices, is now disclosed in clearer language: nor was it less necessary then to be renewed and sanctified by divine influence, and to walk by the faith of unseen realities, than it is under the present economy. Since the fall of man, there has been but one method of recovery revealed; the world has been placed under the same supreme system of redeeming mercy; there has been the same foundation of hope for the penitent; and the object of the ordinances of religion, in all ages, has been the formation of the same pure and holy character.

If the ceremonial law was abrogated by the coming of Christ, it was because, from its very nature, as shadowy and figurative, its continuance was unnecessary; but there is nothing in vows of dedication to God more peculiar to one age than to another. That they are compatible with very high degrees of spirituality and holiness, we learn from the example of Joshua, and the people of Israel, in his day. He was himself eminently pious, and the generation in which he lived was distinguished by its zeal for the divine glory, and obedience to the divine will; and before they entered into covenant with God, they used suitable means for enlarging their conceptions of his holiness, and rendering this act of worship deeply devotional and spiritual. With this case upon record,

we may conclude that the objections to vows of dedication in the service of God, on the ground of their being opposed to the simplicity and spirituality of the Gospel dispensation, is unfounded.

Is it alleged, that the circumstances of the Jewish people were materially different from those of every other nation; inasmuch as they were the chosen and peculiar people of God, and that they were enjoined to do that which it would be criminal in others to attempt? I grant that they were owned and treated as the peculiar people of God,—that they were under his special guidance, and acted by his commission;—that they were commanded to cut off the Canaanites, and to destroy every Israelite who should aim at establishing idolatry. In these particulars, especially in regard to the destruction of the Canaanites, and the power that was vested in the magistrate to prevent schism, the rules by which we judge of the conduct of others are not applicable to them.

But do not all, or nearly all, the inhabitants of the lands where christianity prevails, profess to be the people of God; having been dedicated to him in baptism? May they not, in full consistency with every scriptural principle, voluntarily enter into covenant engagements to be entirely devoted to the will and the glory of God?

II. It is objected to vows of dedication in the service of God, that by laying ourselves under the obligations implied in them, we voluntarily place ourselves in circumstances in which we may contract guilt. It is alleged, that the fall of our first parents,

who were required to enter into covenant with God, should admonish us to beware how we come under similar engagements.

If we vow to do that which is not lawful ; or, if we imagine that we shall merit eternal life by any covenant engagement of our own, our conduct is, of course, attended with guilt, and must lead to misery. But I see not how we are put into the way of committing sin, by solemnly recognising a commanded duty, and by determining, through divine grace, to perform it. In our scriptural confession of God and of the Redeemer,—and all are commanded publicly to profess their faith in God their Saviour,—do we not own him to be our God, and express our obligations, to be devoted to him, sincerely, exclusively, and for ever? What is this, but to form those voluntary engagements, which are vows of dedication to God, and which, in the language of Scripture, may be termed, entering into covenant with him? Are we to refrain from this act, lest, at some future period, we should be guilty of backsliding, and thus commit sin?

III. It is affirmed that the making of vows of dedication unto God is at variance with the self-diffidence and deep humility which, as dependent and erring creatures, we should ever cherish. How, it is asked, can we promise what we shall be in future, when we have an experience of the deceitfulness of the heart, and when we are so well assured that we cannot calculate on our own steadfastness for a single day?

To this it may be answered, that though we know well our own weakness and corruption, yet we know, at the same time, what we ought to be, and what, by

the grace of God, it is our duty to resolve to be. In engaging to perform our duty, we take into account the influences of the Holy Spirit, which are given freely to them that ask him; and which, while we work out our salvation, are promised to work in us, both to will and to do, of God's good pleasure. When we voluntarily vow to be faithful in his service,—to renounce every attachment opposed to our duty to him,—and to honour him in the use of every talent we possess,—we do it on a ground far more stable than the strength of any creature,—the ample promises of the God who cannot lie.

IV. It is alleged, that by making vows of dedication unto God, many become chargeable with hypocrisy. If there be any weight in this objection, it was as applicable to Israel in the days of Joshua, as to us; for, doubtless, there were many among that people, who were merely led by a regard to the opinion of others, and perhaps by a glow of feeling produced by temporary circumstances, to give their consent to the covenant that was made. Are we to suppose, that because there were persons influenced by such motives, and whose professions were at variance with the state of their hearts, the whole transaction was wrong, and that Joshua ought to have refused it his countenance?

If we cannot come to this conclusion without impeaching the divine wisdom, of course the objection, in every similar case, becomes invalid and groundless. All that is implied in personal or public-dedication to the fear and service of God, is the duty of every one; it is what God has an unalienable right to demand

from us, and what cannot be withheld without exposure to punishment. The recollection of their own professions may lead those, who spoke with feigned lips in making them, to reflect seriously on their inconsistency and hypocrisy.

Is it not the duty of Christian rulers to use their influence in bringing all to engage themselves to serve God? If their persuasion should lead some to conform only in appearance, while their hearts are opposed to their professions, the guilt of this inconsistency and hypocrisy rests with the dissemblers, and with them only. They were invited to do that which they are bound to do without any invitation,—to give themselves up unreservedly to God, to choose him as their only Lord and Redeemer, and to engage to walk in the way of his commandments.

It is certainly better not to vow unto the Lord, than to vow, and not to fulfil. But do not they incur guilt, and will not their end be destruction, who keep aloof from every act that would imply an engagement to love and serve God, who live without him in the world, and who never recognise his moral government and authority till confronted with them at his judgment-seat?

CHAPTER XI.

THE TIME AND MANNER IN WHICH GOD IS TO BE WORSHIPPED.

It is clear that God is the only object of religious worship and adoration; and that as he alone is God, he alone is entitled to the reverence and homage due

from the created and dependent being to the self-existent and infinitely-perfect Creator.

But if it be proper that we should exercise love, and veneration, and gratitude to God, it must be right for our own sakes, were there no other reason, that our emotions should be expressed in words ; and these emotions, because they may have an useful influence upon others, and because all are alike bound to cherish them, must be publicly acknowledged, and therefore enunciated in articulate speech. Hence, the duty of social worship.

Man is so formed as to be capable of influencing the feelings of others, and to be susceptible of being influenced himself by the expression of theirs. Is there any one occasion more necessary for him to observe, in turning this law of his nature to good account, than in pouring forth the feelings of the heart in the worship of that God whom it is the glory and happiness of man to know, love, and obey? There is also a common relation subsisting between mankind and the Almighty Father of us all. He is the Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor of all alike. How innumerable are the blessings which we have received, and which we are continually receiving from him ; blessings which we receive in common, and which in common we enjoy ! When to these we add the glorious discoveries of Revelation, and the gifts of human redemption, our obligations to unite together in the thankful acknowledgment of the divine favour, in supplication for its continuance, and in confession of our unworthiness, are very obvious.

In proof of the duty of social worship, it may fur-

ther be justly remarked, that mankind, in consequence of the faculties of reason and of understanding with which they are endowed, and of their being placed at the head of the visible creation, are bound publicly to express their homage to the Creator and Lord of all. While all his works, by reflecting his power, and wisdom, and goodness, seem to hymn his glories, should not the family of man assemble to shew forth his praise? Can they otherwise approve their love and loyalty to their supreme sovereign Lord and Ruler? Besides, has not the performance of this duty a direct tendency to unite mankind still more closely in the bonds of fraternal affection, and to lead all to regard each other, as the children of the same Great Parent, and with the kindness due to the partakers of the same common nature?

Finally, if there were no public worship, the great mass of mankind would not worship God at all. It is chiefly by means of such an institution, that a sense of religion is maintained on the mind of the multitude; or, that the great principles upon which all religion is founded are kept in memory. These truths are obvious to any one who will compare the religious and moral attainments of a people, among whom public worship is maintained, with those of the people among whom it is partially or altogether unknown.

On these, and on other grounds, it appears to me, that reason points out the public worship of God to be a duty,—a duty which, because all are bound to perform, none can neglect, without sinning against God.

It follows that a portion of time must be appro-

priated for the discharge of this solemn duty. But by whom is this time to be fixed? Were this left to the understanding and convenience of each individual, would it not be productive of great confusion? Or, were it merely enjoined by human authority, could it have, generally, the same effect on the conscience? How desirable, and even necessary, that it should be determined by Him whose authority is supreme, and who perfectly knows what portion of his time man should appropriate to the sacred purposes of commemorating the glories and goodness of God, and of promoting his own holiness and happiness.

This, accordingly, is done in the fourth commandment, which was delivered in circumstances of awful solemnity, by the sovereign Lord and Ruler of the universe. “Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy: six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor the stranger that is within thy gates: for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath-day, and hallowed it.”

CHAPTER XII.

THE MORAL OBLIGATION OF THE SABBATH.

As it has been alleged that the Sabbath was a Jewish institution exclusively, and that therefore the obligation to its observance is not perpetual and universal, it is proper that we should first direct our attention to the consideration of this point. The inquiry is obviously of great importance, since it is nothing less than this:—Is the fourth commandment a moral precept, universally binding on mankind ; or is it merely a positive requirement, designed to answer some useful ends under the Mosaic economy, but abrogated with the abolition of the Jewish polity?

It appears to me, that it is of a mixed nature ; that it is moral in as far as it relates to the sacred rest of the Sabbath ; and that it is positive in regard to the particular day of the week on which, by divine appointment, this rest is to be enjoyed. The duties to be performed on this day are of a moral nature, and therefore universally binding: they are approved by reason and conscience, as arising out of the relations which man bears to God ; but the day on which these duties are discharged, being altogether fixed by the will of the Supreme Moral Governor, may be considered as possessing the character of a positive institution, which may be changed by the same authority that has enjoined it. This distinction is observable in the language used in reference to the institution of the Sabbath. “ In six days the Lord made heaven

and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day, and hallowed it." Here we are told, that the Lord blessed, not the seventh day, but the Sabbath, that is, as the word signifies, the sacred rest to be enjoyed on that day. This rest, which is of a moral nature, God has blessed to his people.

Having made this explanatory remark, I proceed to prove that the Sabbath is of perpetual and universal obligation.

I. It was not peculiar to the Jewish dispensation, but instituted immediately after the creation; as we read in Gen. ii. 1, 3: "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made." According to the obvious meaning of this passage, the Sabbath was held on the first day after the creation was ended,—held on this day by the Creator himself, and of course by the first parents of the human race in a state of innocence.

The reason assigned for the sanctification of the seventh day is, that God rested on that day from all his work which he created and made; a reason surely not of a temporary or local nature, but extending to the whole human race alike. The ends of its institution, as alluded to in this passage, a cessation from labour, a commemoration of the works of creation, together with other duties of devotion, are not less universal. We, therefore, infer that an ordinance

which was instituted immediately after the creation of the world, and for reasons and ends which have the same relation to all mankind, is of perpetual obligation. This conclusion is unavoidable, if it be admitted that the Sabbath was instituted at the beginning of the world.

Those writers, accordingly, who deny the moral obligation of the Sabbath, maintain that it was not instituted at the early period referred to, but that it had its origin when the law was given to the Jews. The chief reason by which they support this opinion, is the alleged silence respecting the observance of the day, previously to the gathering of manna in the wilderness.

This is, indeed, slender ground on which to found an argument; and were it not maintained by a writer of Paley's respectability, the time bestowed in noticing it would be idly employed. For, if there be no mention of the observance of the Sabbath during the patriarchal age, neither is it once mentioned in the histories of Joshua, the Judges, Samuel and Saul, that is, during a period of about five hundred years. It needs not surprise us, that in the brief notices recorded of the persons who lived between Adam and Moses, there should have been so great a silence concerning the Sabbath, since we know that things occurred during that period of which the sacred historian makes no mention. Have we not the best ground for believing that those sacrifices were first instituted in the antediluvian ages which typified the atoning sacrifice of the Redeemer; though as to the time and manner of their institution, we have no in-

formation? Are we not assured by the Apostle Jude, that Enoch prophesied of the second coming of our Lord, with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly of their ungodly deeds; while, but for the testimony of this Apostle, the circumstance would have been altogether unknown to us?

We maintain, however, that there are allusions, both in the sacred and profane history of the period in question, to the institution of the Sabbath. There is a reference, as it appears to me, to the division of time into weeks, by the Sabbatical institution, in the conduct of Noah while in the ark. "It came to pass at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark which he had made; and he sent forth a raven, which went forth to and fro, until the waters were dried up from off the earth. Also he sent forth a dove from him, to see if the waters were abated from off the face of the ground; but the dove found no rest for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark, for the waters were on the face of the whole earth: then he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark. And he stayed yet other seven days; and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; and the dove came in to him in the evening; and lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf pluckt off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth. And he stayed yet other seven days, and sent forth the dove, which returned not again unto him any more." I think it is manifest that the allusion here is to the hebdomadal cycle which God established immediately after his

work of creation. Nor is it less clear from the following paragraph in the history of Jacob, that this division of time was viewed as a matter of course, and, consequently, had been fixed previously to the era at which that patriarch lived. “Fulfil her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years. And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week: and he gave him Rachel, his daughter, to wife also.”

The counting of time by weeks was common among all ancient nations. This, as a fixed division, was known to the Indians, Syrians, Chaldeans, Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans, as well as to every other people of whom we have any record. The seventh day is said to be holy by Homer, Hesiod, and Callimachus; and Josephus and Philo affirm, that the seventh day is a festival to every nation; and that no city of Greeks or Barbarians can be found, which does not acknowledge a seventh day's rest from labour. How can this authenticated fact be accounted for, but on the supposition that the Sabbath was instituted at the time referred to in the book of Genesis, namely, “When the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them?”

It may, besides, with propriety be maintained, that the institution of the Sabbath at this early period is rendered highly probable by the account given us in the Scriptures of the distinguished piety of the patriarchs. They walked with God; they obtained a good report through faith; they obeyed the voice of the Lord, and kept his charge, his commandments, his statutes, and his laws. Is it not highly probable

that the Sabbath was one of these divine commandments which they observed ; especially as we know, from experience, how necessary the observance of this holy institution is to the maintenance, as well as to the progress, of true religion in the heart of man ? If He, who knows how essential the return of the Sabbath is to the recovery and the furtherance of holiness in sinful beings, has commanded them not to forsake the assembling of themselves together, is it likely that he would have left mankind, till the age of Moses, without an institution so necessary to the moral and religious purposes of their being ?

But it is further maintained by Paley in support of the opinion, that the Sabbath was exclusively a Jewish institution, and that it had no existence till the Mosaic economy ; that the passage in the beginning of the second chapter of Genesis is introduced into the narrative by way of anticipation, and that the account of the origin of this institution is to be found in the sixteenth chapter of Exodus, at the twenty-second verse. We there read : “ And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man ; and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses. And he said unto them, This is that which the Lord hath said, to-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord : bake that which ye will bake to-day, and seethe that ye will seethe ; and that which remaineth over, lay up for you, to be kept until the morning. And they laid it up unto the morning as Moses bade. And Moses said, Eat that to-day, for to-day is a Sabbath unto the Lord : to-day ye shall not find it in the field. Six

days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the Sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my statutes and my laws? See, for that the Lord hath given you the Sabbath, therefore, he giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days: abide ye every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day."

On the reading of this passage, the first thing that occurs to the mind is, not certainly that the Sabbath was a new institution with which the Jews were formerly unacquainted, but that the division of time into weeks was well known to them. Moses and the elders speak of the days of the week, and not of the days of the month; and they speak of this hebdomadal cycle as a thing perfectly familiar to the people. But how could this be, if the Sabbath was only then first instituted?

The next thing that strikes the unbiassed reader in this passage is, that the people, aware that the seventh day was the Sabbath, gathered of their own accord twice as much of the manna as they were wont to gather, lest, by deferring it till the morrow, they might break the rest of the Sabbath. This impression is strengthened, when we remember that they had been previously commanded to gather daily of the manna only what was sufficient for the daily supply of themselves and families.

In the address of Moses to the elders, he evidently

takes for granted that they were previously acquainted with the institution of the Sabbath. "This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord." The Israelites, during their bondage in Egypt, perhaps, might have been negligent in their observance of the Sabbath; and perhaps in some cases they might have been incapable of obeying the commandment; and therefore might have had less perfect knowledge of the proper day on which it should be sanctified; but that they were familiar with the institution itself, is abundantly manifest from the very passage which Paley adduces in proof of their ignorance. Do they shew any surprise, or make any inquiry, when Moses reminds them of the sanctity of the Sabbath? They might have been in some doubt as to the proper day, from the imperfect reckoning of time which they had kept in their servile condition; but their whole conduct is like that of persons who had the most perfect knowledge of the existence of the institution.

The other passages quoted to prove that the Sabbath is of Jewish origin, from Ezekiel and Nehemiah*, in which it is said, "Moreover, also, I gave them my Sabbaths;" and, "Thou madest known unto them thy holy Sabbath," are perfectly consistent with the views I have already given. The Lord, when he had chosen the posterity of Abraham to be a peculiar people to himself, enjoined them to observe commandments which had been previously enacted, and which were binding on the whole human race as well as upon them. They were, indeed, laid under additional ob-

* Ezek. xx. 12. Nehem. ix. 14.

ligations to give a willing obedience to the whole will of God ; and these obligations, arising from their redemption from Egyptian bondage, and from the other blessings conferred upon them, might be adduced as so many supplementary motives to their walking in all the ordinances and commandments of God. In the same way we are urged by the love of Christ, by the worth of his precious blood, by the encouragement held out to us from the promised influence of the Spirit, and by all other christian motives, to obey those laws which are binding on us as intelligent and accountable creatures, and which we, and the whole human race, should be bound to obey, though there had been no discovery of the plan of redeeming mercy.

It is in this way we are to understand the passages in which the children of Israel are urged to observe the Sabbath, not merely in consideration of its being intended to commemorate the work of creation, but as it was the instituted sign of their redemption from Egypt, and of their being in a covenant relation with God. All these motives are conjoined in the passages which I am about to quote from the thirty-first chapter of Exodus, at the sixteenth verse ; and from the fifth chapter of Deuteronomy, at the twelfth verse. “ Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever : for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed. Keep the Sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God

bath commanded thee. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God:—and remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched-out arm: therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.”

Upon these passages it is remarked by those who maintain that the Sabbath is exclusively a Jewish institution, that “it does not seem easy to understand how the Sabbath could be a sign between God and the people of Israel, unless the observance of it was peculiar to that people, and designed to be so.” To me, I confess, nothing seems easier to be understood. The Sabbath was a sign between God and his people, inasmuch as it was the token of his special favour to them in making them his people; and it was a sign, because their observance of this institution, primarily intended to commemorate the creation of the world, distinguished them as the worshippers of the true God. “I gave them my Sabbaths to be a sign between me and them; that they may know that I am Jehovah, who sanctify them.” But that this use of the Sabbath did not make it cease to be a memorial of God as the creator of all things, is evident from the reason annexed to the passage in which the Sabbath is characterized as a sign between God and his people: “In six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed.”

Thus the original design of the Sabbath remained. Its being made a sign from God to his chosen people,

no more implies that this institution had no existence before it was thus applied, than it proves that the rainbow had not a being previous to its appropriation as a sign of the covenant made with Noah. If its being fixed on as a sign between God and his people were sufficient evidence to prove that the obligation of the Sabbath was local and temporary, it would follow that the two great commandments of the law, love to God and to our neighbour, were also local and temporary in their obligation; since in the book of Deuteronomy, the sixth chapter, and eighth verse, Moses says to Israel, "Thou shalt bind them for a sign on thine hand." The children of Israel were urged to the observance of the Sabbath from the consideration of its being a sign between God and them, and of its being a memorial of their deliverance from Egypt; just as we are urged to the observance of this, and of all other divinely-instituted ordinances, from the consideration, that we have not been redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: but, as with the Jews, the primary end for which the Sabbath was appointed, remained just as before any supplementary uses had been added to it, so does it continue with us. These uses to which it is applied, and which so happily harmonize with its design, in place of diminishing its obligation, only suggest new and powerful motives to its devout observance.

In proof that the Sabbath was exclusively a Jewish institution, it is further argued, that the apostle Paul considers it as a part of the Jewish ritual, and not

binding upon Christians. The passage on which this opinion is founded is in Col. ii. 16, 17. "Let no man, therefore, judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ." In reply to this, it is maintained, that this passage refers to the holidays of the Jews, which were styled Sabbaths; or, if this be denied, it may be affirmed that the allusion is to the seventh day, and not to the Christian Sabbath; as this is never in the New Testament called the Sabbath, but the first day of the week, and the Lord's day. The Judaizing teachers insisted on the Gentile converts observing the seventh day as the Sabbath; but its observance on *that day* was abrogated along with the ceremonial and judicial law of the Jews, which, as ceremonial and typical, was the "shadow of things to come." Believers, therefore, who kept holy the first day of the week, in remembrance of Christ's resurrection, were not to be condemned, or to disquiet themselves about the censorious judgments of others, in regard to their conduct in this matter.

It is said, by those who allege that the Sabbath was merely a part of the Jewish ritual, and abrogated with it, that its observance was not one of the articles enjoined by the Apostles upon the Christian Gentiles, in Acts xv. To this no better answer can be given, than that neither were they commanded to abstain from theft, murder, lying, coveting, impiety, and idolatry.

Finally, it is affirmed in support of the same

opinion, that the Sabbath is not expressly enjoined in the New Testament. It is very explicitly declared in the New Testament, that the Sabbath was instituted at the close of the Creation: "For he spake, in a certain place, of the seventh day, on this wise; and God did rest on the seventh day from all his works *." The observance of the Lord's Day, in deference to the prepossessions of the Jews, was introduced gradually. In place of announcing, from the beginning of their ministry, the abolition of the seventh day as the Sabbath, the Apostles, while they observed the first day of the week, embraced the opportunity which was afforded them of preaching the gospel on the Jewish Sabbath. The Jewish service was not attacked, neither were the ordinances peculiar to the Christian dispensation neglected.

"When the Apostles came to declare in form, that the Jewish worship was to cease, the minds of the church were so well prepared to receive this declaration, that it was carried into a general execution. Difficulties and divisions arose, indeed, about this subject, in several churches, particularly about circumcision; and produced a course of serious contention. What would have been the case, had this part of the system been begun at an earlier period? About the Christian Sabbath no dispute appears to have existed during the three first centuries. All the churches appear to have adopted it, and to have neglected the Jewish Sabbath without any difficulty. Was not this method of introducing so important a change dictated by true wisdom?"

* Heb. iv. 4.

Thus have I proved that the Sabbath is not a local and temporary institution; that it was not peculiar to the Jewish dispensation, but appointed at the close of the Creation, to commemorate the perfections of God as the Creator; and that its obligation, therefore, is perpetual and universal.

II. The perpetuity of the Sabbath is further proved by the place which the fourth commandment holds in the Decalogue, and by the general and comprehensive terms in which this commandment is expressed.

The summary of the moral law, contained in the ten commandments, was proclaimed with awful solemnity on Mount Sinai, by the Sovereign Lord and Ruler of the universe. So majestic was the scene, accompanied by smoke and clouds, and thunder and lightnings, that the Israelites were overwhelmed with terror. The moral law, which on this occasion the Almighty delivered with an audible voice, was written with his own finger on two tables of stone. It was inscribed on such tables, doubtless, to denote its perpetual obligation. Still further to distinguish it from mere national and temporary statutes, it exclusively was put within the ark, under that mercy-seat which was a type of Christ, by whom the law has been magnified and made honourable.

Now, let me ask, what was the design of all these circumstances,—of the splendour and majesty of that scene, at which not only all Israel trembled, but in the view of which even Moses himself exceedingly feared and quaked,—of writing these commandments a second time upon tables of stone by the finger of God; and of afterwards depositing them in the ark,

the symbol of the Divine presence? The design surely was to point out the superior importance, and the perpetuity and universal obligation, of the moral law, and thus to distinguish it from every other part of the Mosaic ritual.

But the fourth commandment is embodied in this law, and is delivered in a manner as absolute as any of the commandments with which it is united. Unless it forms a part of the moral law, which is universal and eternal in its obligation, why was it delivered along with it, and in circumstances of so very peculiar a nature? Unless its observance be of the greatest importance to the holiness and happiness of man, why should it alone be prefaced with the solemn admonition, "Remember!" Or why, unless it be binding on the whole human race, were the foreigners among the Jews, even those who had not submitted to the peculiar rites of the Jewish religion, commanded to observe it? And it claims our notice, that this ordinance was obligatory on strangers, of whatever description, who were within their gates, even upon those who were not allowed to eat of the Passover. Why should this distinction have been made by the Sovereign Legislator, unless it be to shew, that the one institution, being appointed from the beginning, was to subserve designs in which the whole family of Adam are alike interested; while the other, being intended to commemorate a particular event in the history of the Jews, was restricted to them, and to all who should identify themselves with them, by embracing all the articles of their religion.

But the argument for the moral and perpetual obligation of the fourth commandment, arising from its forming a part of the ten commandments, Paley attempts to answer, by alleging, that the distinction between moral and positive precepts was unknown to the simplicity of ancient language.

In reply, I would ask, was not this distinction well known to Him who wrote the Decalogue with his own finger on two tables of stone? Was it not written with the design of being useful to all who should afterwards hear it, or read it? Or why were Israel commanded, when they had passed over Jordan, to inscribe this law very legibly upon two pillars of stone, but to shew that it was a matter in which all were equally and deeply concerned? "Therefore, it shall be, when ye be gone over Jordan, that ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day; and thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly *."

The objection which I am now combating, takes for granted, that the Decalogue was announced and written by Moses in the same way as he announced and wrote the national and ceremonial laws of the Jews; an opinion, which the slightest consideration will shew to be totally unfounded.

The ceremonial law was communicated through the mediation of Moses, and was by him written in a book, and placed beside the ark: the Decalogue was spoken by the voice of God, and twice written with his finger on tables of stone, amid scenes of awful grandeur and majesty, and afterwards put within the

* Deuter. xxvii. 1,—8.

ark. "This," says Moses, addressing Israel, "the Lord spake unto all your assembly in the Mount, out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and the thick darkness, with a great voice; and he added no more. And he wrote them on two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me." For what other reason, than to point out its superior importance, and perpetual obligation, was this distinction made between the communication of the moral and of the ceremonial law?

Our Lord himself has also distinguished them, not merely by giving an exposition of the ten commandments in his sermon on the Mount, but in his reply to the young Ruler, who asked him what good thing he should do, that he might inherit eternal life; and to the Scribe, who inquired, Which is the first and great commandment? Our Lord, by alluding in both cases to the Decalogue only, has decidedly shewn that it differs both in its nature and in the rank which it holds from those laws which were merely national and positive. He elsewhere affirms, that however much, by subsequent revelations, it might be explained or enforced, nothing could be added to it, and nothing taken from it; and that it is more stable and permanent than the laws of the material world, or than the frame of the universe. "Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."

Testimony of a similar nature is borne by the apostle Paul to the authority and perpetual obligation of the ten commandments, or moral law. In the thirteenth chapter of the Romans, after reciting the five

commands of the second table of the law, he adds, "And if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In what language could he more unequivocally shew that the Decalogue is a summary of the whole moral law, and is, from its very nature, to be distinguished from all other commandments? He elsewhere says, that the fifth commandment is the first commandment with promise*. But were there not commands, with promises annexed to them, given to the patriarchs before the law was delivered on Sinai? The fifth commandment, therefore, could only be called the first commandment with promise, as being the first in the Decalogue that was so distinguished. Does not the circumstance of the Apostle's styling the Decalogue, "The Commandments," by way of eminence, shew the place which they held in his estimation, and that he regarded them as binding, not upon Jews merely, but upon the Gentile converts, to whom he now addressed himself?

III. The moral and perpetual obligation of the Sabbath is proved by the ends which it was designed to answer. These shew, that the fourth commandment, in so far as it relates to the rest or sacred purposes of the Sabbath, is of a strictly moral nature, and consequently, that it is unalterable in its obligation. Its leading ends certainly are,—to give an opportunity to mankind of resting from labour,—of acknowledging and commemorating the perfections of God as the Creator of the universe,—of increasing in holiness while man remained in a state of innocence,—

* Eph. vi. 1—3.

and now that he is in a fallen condition, of using the appointed means of recovering the holiness and happiness which have been lost. Though the Sabbath has been applied to other uses, in entire accordance with these, it will be admitted that these are its great and primary designs.

But do not these purposes concern alike the whole human race? Is it not the duty of all to know, love, and worship God, and to acknowledge his perfections of wisdom, power, and goodness, in the work of creation? Are not all alike interested in regaining the primeval purity and dignity of our nature; and, therefore, bound to use the appointed means, and in the best manner, for attaining this end? But that this end could not be attained without the observance of the Sabbath is clear from the history of mankind. In proportion as it is neglected, irreligion and immorality prevail.

Of such vast importance are the purposes which the Sabbath is designed to serve, that the observance of the fourth commandment is necessary to the fulfilment of the other nine. Is not that precept, then, eminently of a moral nature, that enjoins duties which are binding upon all alike, and the neglect of which leads to impiety, and to all moral evil? If religion be of a moral nature—if its practice be obligatory on man, then is the observance of the fourth commandment, according to the ends of its institution, a moral duty of the highest order. It could not, therefore, be of a mere local and temporary nature; and sooner shall heaven and earth pass away, than that it should fail or be abolished.

IV. The moral and perpetual obligation of the Sabbath is further proved by those passages in the Prophets, in which its observance under the Gospel dispensation is set forth. There are allusions, unquestionably, to the Sabbath, and to its duties, in the following passages ; in which the inspired writers are to be understood as declaring the fact, that this institution should have a place in the kingdom of the Messiah. In the fifty-sixth chapter of Isaiah, at the sixth verse, we read : “ Also the sons of the strangers, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants ; every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant, even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer : for my house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.”

That this passage relates to gospel times is clear, from the tenour of its language, and, indeed, is universally admitted. Yet the Sabbath is spoken of as an institution sacredly observed by the strangers, or the Gentiles, who should be introduced into the church of Christ. If this be the word of Him who sees the end from the beginning, and whose counsel shall stand, and who shall do all his pleasure, it must be understood as predicting the observance of the Sabbath in all coming ages. How remarkably has the prediction been fulfilled in the calling of the Gentiles,—in the exertion of that mighty power, and chiefly on the Christian Sabbath, by which the people have been made willing,—and in the spiritual worship which has been presented on this holy day by the sons

of the stranger who have joined themselves to the Lord!

In Psalm cxviii. 19—26, we thus read. “Open to me the gates of righteousness; I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord; this gate of the Lord into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise thee; for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused, is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing, it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save, now, I beseech thee, O Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.” The testimony of infallible expositors assures us that this passage contains a prediction concerning the humiliation, the rejection, the glory, and kingdom of the Messiah. The expression, “this is the day the Lord hath made,” can only signify, as, indeed, it has been universally understood as signifying, the day on which the Saviour rose, which his resurrection had consecrated as a holy Sabbath of spiritual duty and enjoyment to his disciples in all generations. It has been so observed by them; and the correspondence between the prediction and the fulfilment is not less striking in this than in the prophecy formerly quoted.

V. The moral and perpetual obligation of the Sabbath is further proved by the language of our Lord and his Apostles. I forbear quoting the passages in which our Lord is supposed to allude to the observance of the Christian Sabbath. Nor shall I here adduce the evidence which proves that the Disciples held sacred the first day of the week as a Sabbath to

the Lord. The allusion of the Apostle John to this day is decisive on this subject. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day;"--the name by which the primitive Church designated the Christian Sabbath.

Thus have I proved that the Sabbath is of moral and perpetual obligation; and consequently that the neglect or violation of it, in regard to the purposes for which it has been instituted, is a breach of the most important moral duty.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CHANGE OF THE SABBATH FROM THE LAST TO THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK.

If the Sabbath be of perpetual obligation, how has it come to pass that the day has been changed from the last to the first day of the week?

In replying to this question, we must bear in mind, what has already been remarked, namely, that it is that which constitutes the Sabbath, and not the day on which it is held, that is of moral and perpetual obligation. It was the Sabbath, and not the day, that God blessed and sanctified. The day might have been any one in the week, as well as the seventh, had it pleased God to appoint it. There was indeed a propriety in selecting the last day of the week, because it was the first which shone upon the world after God had finished the work of creation. Yet it is evident, that God might at a subsequent

period dissociate the Sabbath from this day, should circumstances arise to render it expedient; and that the institution might be applied to purposes additional to those which appear to have been announced in its original appointment. Such a change implied no alteration in the Sabbath as a moral precept or institute; the change only respected that which altogether depended on the will of the legislator, the day on which this unalterable ordinance was to be observed. The institution, without being abrogated, might surely be made to commemorate another of the wonderful works of God, in addition to the original creation.

The Sabbath for the best reasons has been transferred from the seventh to the first day of the week. This transference took place in consideration of its being the day on which the Saviour rose from the dead;—on which it was proved that he had finished that glorious work, in comparison of the greatness of which the former creation should not be mentioned, nor come into mind. To commemorate this work of redeeming love and mercy, to which creation and providence were to be made subservient, it was meet that the Sabbath should become a perpetual memorial of it. This work, or as it is sometimes styled, “The New Creation,” is held up by Prophets and Apostles, and by God himself, to the view of the universe, as affording the richest discovery of his glory, and as a ground of eternal rejoicing to all holy beings. “Sing, O heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree there-

in: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel *."

If it was expedient that the Sabbath should commemorate the deliverance from Egypt, is it not meet that it should now be a memorial of that great redemption from sin and death, in which all mankind are alike interested? If, for the glory of the Divine Redeemer, all things were made, all things are ordered, is it not fit that to the commemoration of his love and power should be dedicated the weekly Sabbath; and that thus, the views of his disciples should be supremely directed to him, whom all are commanded to honour, even as they honour the Father? He who is adored and worshipped as Redeemer, is the same person who is adored and worshipped as Creator. The great fact is still commemorated in the observance of the Sabbath, "That in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day."

That the Sabbath has thus been changed by divine authority from the last to the first day of the week, we learn from the recorded practice of the Apostles and first christians. Immediately after the resurrection of our Lord, while they were assembled, and the doors of the house were shut for fear of the Jews, Jesus came, and stood in the midst of them, and said, "Peace be unto you." On the first day of the following week, he appeared among them in like manner, and saluted them in similar terms. It was on the first day of the week also that the disciples were assembled with one accord in one place at the feast of

* Isaiah xlv. 23.

Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit signified his approval by the communication of his gifts and influences. It was on the first day of the week, the christian Sabbath, that the disciples at Troas came together for to break bread; that is, to eat the Lord's supper: a mode of expression, which shews that it was the established custom of the followers of the Redeemer to observe the Sabbath on the first day of the week. "Upon the first day of the week," says the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians, "let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him." The obvious reason why this collection was to be made for the poor saints at Jerusalem on the first day of the week, rather than on any other, was, that it was the day on which the disciples of Christ assembled together for divine worship.

Nor should it be forgotten, in a summary of the evidence on this head, that the Apostle John tells us, that he was "in the spirit on the Lord's day*:" a mode of expression which he uses incidentally; and thus evidently shews, that it was the well-known name of that day on which the disciples assembled for the worship of God, and which was held sacred to the Redeemer.

I shall take no further notice of the testimony of ancient uninspired writers concerning the authority for the change of the Sabbath, than to say, that it is very abundant.

Nor do I think it unnecessary to mention the divine blessing which has been so manifestly annexed to the observance of the christian Sabbath. It has been

* Rev. i. 10.

rendered the effectual means of preserving the power and the practice of true religion in the world ; of enlarging the boundaries of the church ; and of ministering to the edification and comfort of the pious and excellent of the human race. So necessary is the sanctification of this day to the interests of morality, that these interests flourish or decline just in proportion to the manner in which it is observed.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE MANNER IN WHICH THE SABBATH SHOULD BE OBSERVED.

If the Sabbath, as has been proved, is of moral and perpetual obligation, it is clear that all are bound to observe it according to the designs of its institution. It is intended to commemorate the work of creating power, and more especially, the work of redeeming love and mercy ; to give to man, and to the inferior animals, in the service of man, a season of repose ; and to furnish the opportunity, returning periodically, of preparing for a state of future being and blessedness.

It is needless to remark, that we are bound to abstain from the commission of sin on this, as on other days, whether of thought, of word, or of action.

That we are bound to abstain from all worldly business, is clear, from the express words of the statute ; “ Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work ; but the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy

God; in it thou shalt not do any work." There is here an express prohibition against all secular pursuits. Nor can any part of that seventh portion of our time, which God commands us to devote to him, be given to any mere worldly avocation, without a violation of the sanctity of the Sabbath, and, consequently, without dishonour to the authority of heaven. Though the temporal sanction by which its observance was enforced under the Jewish dispensation does not now remain, the former existence of such a sanction in reference to this commandment, shews the importance which the Supreme Legislator of the universe attached to it. "Ye shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy:—whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from amongst his people."

When it is so obvious that all worldly employments whatever are prohibited, it is unnecessary to make an enumeration of what comes within the prohibition. Commercial transactions, writing or answering letters on business, travelling, requiring clerks and dependants to give their attention to worldly concerns,—may be mentioned as violations of the Sabbath, which, though often practised, are in direct contradiction to the commandment.

Nor does this commandment merely prohibit an outward attention to worldly employments; it is violated by worldly thoughts and conversation. The service which God requires, and which he will accept, is that of the heart. It is clearly impossible for us to observe the day holily and profitably, that is, according to the spiritual designs of its institution, without a framing of the heart to the great duties to be prac-

tised. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day ; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable ; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words : then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord*."

Nor is it less manifest, that we are bound to abstain from all secular pleasures on the Sabbath. Those innocent amusements and indulgences which we may very properly allow ourselves at other times, are not lawful on this day, just because they are inconsistent with the serious and solemn thoughts, the spiritual affections which we ought to cherish, and the religious duties in which we should engage. Whatever has a direct tendency to divert our minds from the holy purposes of the day, and to unfit us for its exercises, such as frivolous conversation, journeying, the perusal of books of a secular nature, the giving or receiving entertainments, we are bound, as we regard the authority of heaven, to shun.

Finally, we are to abstain from wasting the hallowed hours of the Sabbath in idleness. If, on ordinary occasions, we are commanded to be, not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, it is surely incumbent on us, on that day which God has consecrated to himself, to serve him with a holy activity of mind, and to call upon our souls, and upon all that is within us to be stirred up to bless and magnify the name of the Lord.

The duties which we are to perform on the Sabbath are, generally, all such as are of a religious nature.

I. Those of public worship. We learn with what

* Isa. lviii. 13, 14.

fervour and delight good men of old engaged in this duty, from the Scriptural record which has been transmitted to us of their pious aspirations. “How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee. A day spent in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness *.”

That all are bound to assemble together for the worship of God on the Christian Sabbath, is clear, not only from the example of the members of the Jewish, and of the Divine Founder and of the Apostles of the Christian church, but from the language of the New Testament. “Let us consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is †.” Nor will they who revere the authority of Christ seek for any other authority for the performance of this duty, than what is implied in his own gracious promise: “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them ‡.”

When we consider, in connexion with this direct authority for public worship, the numerous advantages derived from it, which cannot be enjoyed without it, we are surely entitled to affirm, that the person who neglects it is violating a most important and a most manifest obligation.

* Psalm, lxxxiv.

† Heb. x. 24, 25.

‡ Matt. xviii. 20.

Prayer is an essential part of public worship, consisting of adoration, thanksgiving, and confession. It is true, the hearer of prayer knows our thoughts afar off, that he is already acquainted with the sins to be confessed, and with the wants to be supplied ; and it can be no office of prayer, therefore, to add to his knowledge, or to change his purpose. But if it be desirable and necessary that creatures so dependent, and helpless, and sinful, should entertain a lively sense of their dependence, and helplessness, and sinfulness, what means can be so likely to keep alive this impression, as the frequent and devout acknowledgment of mercies received, and the humble offering of petitions for blessings required ?

But the divine testimony, as to the duty and efficacy of prayer is decisive. “ Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find. Pray without ceasing. Be careful for nothing, but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men ; for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty ; for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour.”

Praise is another part of public worship, due from us to our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer. It is authorized by Scripture,—by the practice of the Church in every age,—and by the representation which is given of the worship of heaven. “ O come,” says the inspired Psalmist, “ let us sing unto the Lord ;

let us make a joyful noise unto the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

The hearing of the word read and preached, and the celebration of the ordinances of baptism and of the Lord's Supper, are also important parts of the worship of the Christian church; and to be attended to in reverential obedience to that divine authority by which they are enjoined.

It is scarcely necessary to remark, that in order to perform any of these duties of public devotion really and acceptably, they must be performed heartily, and as unto the Lord.

II. The private duties of the Sabbath are family worship, and individual and secret prayer. These, indeed, are the daily duties of every family and individual. Yet, the Lord's day is not sanctified without them: they are to be performed in connexion with self-examination, and the instruction and catechising of children and of servants. The hallowed leisure which this day affords us is to be diligently improved in the discharge of all those offices by which the spiritual and eternal interests of ourselves, and of those intrusted to our charge, may be promoted.

III. Works of mercy and necessity are to be performed on the Sabbath. These were admitted under the Jewish as well as under the Christian dispensation. "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," said our Lord

in reference to this very subject. His own declaration, that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath, sanctions the performance of the works in question.

Be it remarked, however, that a work of necessity is that which could not be provided against by ordinary foresight and attention ; which cannot be deferred till another day ; and which, from its obvious urgency, gives no encouragement to the violation of the Sabbath. A work of undoubted necessity and mercy is a duty and not an indulgence.

There is no commandment enforced by more numerous motives than this. It is enjoined by the authority of Heaven ; sanctioned by the example of God, who rested on the seventh day, and by that of our Lord, who rose from the dead, and rested on the Christian Sabbath ; recommended by the important nature of the spiritual duties to be practised ; and by its direct subserviency to our growing meetness for everlasting life. It is the necessary and the appointed ordinance of heaven, for enlightening, sanctifying, comforting, and saving fallen beings, and which furnishes them on earth with an emblem of the repose and enjoyment of another world. With what joy and thankfulness should we hail the return of the Sabbath, given in infinite mercy to the human race by their Creator and Redeemer. “ This is the day the Lord hath made ; we will rejoice and be glad in it.”

CHAPTER XV.

THE NECESSITY OF PIETY TO GOD TO THE EXISTENCE OF TRUE VIRTUE AND MORALITY, PROVED BY THE STATE OF THE HEATHEN WORLD.

IF the statements of Scripture which represent a departure from God,—a violation of our duty to Him to be the source of all sin, be well founded, it will follow, that wherever ignorance of God, or idolatry prevails, gross immorality will, at the same time, abound. That it did keep pace with idolatry, and that the whole heathen world was deeply debased by it, the Apostle Paul affirms. “ Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness ; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity ; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful ; who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them *.”

The truth of this humbling account of the gross depravity and immorality of the Gentile world is incontrovertible. It would be so, though there had been no other proof than that which is furnished by the inspired record before us. But the evidence arising from other sources goes to attest the reality of the revolting and affecting condition held up to our view by the

* Rom. i. 29—32.

Apostle's statement. When we consider that this was the state of the whole world, with the exception of the Jews, and perhaps a few other individuals,—that they were totally estranged in heart and in life from the love and obedience of that holy and glorious Being that made them,—and that they were living in the neglect of the most important duties, in the indulgence of every evil passion, and in the practice of all manner of wickedness and impurity, we have an appalling discovery of the entire apostacy of man, and that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

The advantages which they enjoyed, and to which we have adverted, of knowing the character, perfections, and will of God, and of loving and obeying him, they had misimproved, and were now sunk in ignorance and immorality so gross, that their extent is almost incredible and inconceivable to us. The law which was originally written on their hearts, and which, in so far as it went, was an authorized rule of moral obligation, they had, by their extreme impiety and depravity, in a great measure obliterated; and the conscience also which bears witness, and which approves, or censures and condemns, was darkened, perverted, and nearly silent. To this height of ungodliness and unrighteousness had they reached when our Lord appeared; the earth was filled with rapacity, fraud, violence and blood; and there scarcely remained in many countries as much virtue as is necessary to prevent an entire dissolution of the bonds by which society is held together. In this account, which the Apostle gives of the state of the Gentile world, we notice—

I. Their impiety. They are described as not liking to retain God in their knowledge,—as haters of God,—as changing the truth of God into a lie, and worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator. The pure and holy character of God, the spirituality of that worship which he requires, the rectitude of his law, were far from being pleasing objects of contemplation to their depraved hearts. Their affections were alienated from the God of truth and holiness; they, therefore, gave religious homage to a multitude of idol deities; and framed such a system of worship as encouraged them in their ungodliness and unrighteousness. They did so in opposition to the light of their conscience, to the great truths concerning the being and providence of God which were inculcated by the view of the constitution and order of the world, to the doctrines of revelation transmitted to them by tradition, and to the standing memorial afforded to mankind of the perfections and the moral government of God, in the history, preservation, ordinances, and laws of the Jewish nation. They substituted non-entities in room of the living and true God; impure and foolish rites in place of his holy worship; and pleased themselves with gods whose character accorded with their own, who laid no restraints on their corrupt desires, but allowed them to work all uncleanness with greediness.

The most marked feature in this impiety is, that it arose from hatred to God. This is the origin which the Scriptures assign to the apostacy of man from the God that made him. A principle of enmity has been introduced into his heart, which shews its operation in

the Jews as well as in the Gentiles, and which, while it discovered its strength in both, by their proneness to forsake and forget God, produced that system of idolatry and immorality that filled the world with spiritual darkness and death. To them all might fitly be applied the language in which Isaiah described the depravity and guilt of the Jews,—“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken;—I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward:—the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores*.”

It is a mistake to suppose, that the principle of depravity in the human heart which gave rise to the gross impiety, polytheism, and idolatry of the heathen world, is at all different from that evil bias of the carnal mind which is enmity against God, and is not subject to his law. The alienation of the mind from God is not the peculiar characteristic of any age or of any portion of our race, but of every age, and of all mankind. It shews its operation in man under the profession of true religion as well as of false, and in all the stages of his existence, from his cradle to his grave. It is more palpable in the barrier which

* Isa. i. 4—6.

it raises up between the presence of God and the soul in the system of idolatrous worship; but it is not less real in the multitude of nominal christians who live without God in the world. Their idols are those of the heart,—the gratifications of sense and of intellect: they seek their happiness, not in God, but in running the career of ambition, or in earning a reputation of benevolence and usefulness, or, in the enjoyments of domestic life. They are not gross transgressors, it may be, of the law of God,—they are not avowed unbelievers in his word,—they are not habitual neglecters of the forms of worship by which he is honoured; but does the favour of God form an element in their happiness? How often through the week, and through the year, do their hearts and affections rise towards Him who is alone adequate to be the strength of our hearts, and our portion for ever?

II. The immorality of the Gentiles was the natural consequence of their impiety and idolatry. It is religion that makes known to man the rule of moral duty, and that presents the most powerful motives to its practice. It is this that prescribes it in all its extent, and enforces it by divine authority. But in the impure and cruel rites, and foolish ceremonies that constituted the worship of the gods, what doctrine was there to be believed, and what law was there enjoined, which could be of the smallest use in regulating and directing moral conduct. The office of their priests was not to teach men to live virtuously, but what gods they were to worship, what sacrifices they were to offer, and in what manner the rites were to be observed. Their religion had no

relation to the state of the heart, or to the practice of the life, in any other way than to cherish and deepen their depravity, by exhibiting to them in the objects of their worship the grossest impurity and immorality. The very practices by which they worshipped the gods were in many instances of an immoral nature, and had a direct tendency to encourage vice and licentiousness.

The darkness and irreligion thus produced, influenced every thing, with which, as human beings and moral agents, they were connected. It led them to shew their blindness in regard to the very elements of moral truth and duty, and to call evil good, and good evil; to put darkness for light, and light for darkness; to put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Hence, their civil laws and constitutions were, in many instances, directly at variance with moral obligation,—permitting, if not enjoining, the indulgence of sensual passion, and tending to stifle every sentiment of mercy and compassion in the human breast. This remark might be very fully illustrated and proved by a reference to the laws and customs of the most civilized heathen nations, many of which were revolting to humanity, and contrary to the first principles of morals.—But I observe,—

III. That their immorality was the consequence of the blindness and impenitence to which God gave them up, on account of their extreme impiety and idolatry. This fact, so awful in its nature, as the severest infliction of divine wrath, is twice asserted in one chapter*. “Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to

* Rom. i.

dishonour their own bodies between themselves:—and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.”

This doctrine, so often alluded to in scripture, is quite accordant with our views of the holiness and justice of God. Is he on any ground bound to strive with the conscience of the sinner after he wilfully perseveres in blindness and impenitence? When moral agents have misimproved their advantages, and done dishonour to the government and majesty of God, is it not meet that they should be allowed to act according to the bias of their own hearts? Is it unjust in God to withdraw those divine influences from them which they have resisted, which they have never sought, and of which they are anxious to be quit? In infinite mercy he bears long with them, exercising his patience and forgiveness, and asks, with the compassionate tenderness of a parent towards his children, —“ O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel; how shall I make thee as Admah; how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.”

But we know there is a limit at which God gives sinners up to the lusts of their own hearts, and when, as it were, he commands the means and ordinances of his grace to let them alone. “ My spirit shall not always strive with man; my people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me. So I

gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts; and they walked in their own counsels." This was the state of incurable insensibility into which many seem to have fallen in the days of our Lord, and which occasioned the tears of the Saviour, accompanied with the memorable words,—“ If thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes.”

The Gentiles, by their misimprovement of the means with which they were favoured, by the dishonour done to the perfections and government of God, in changing his truth into a lie, and in worshipping and serving the creature more than the Creator, brought down upon themselves the greatest of judgments. As they rejected God, even while copiously showering his blessings upon them, he rejected *them*. He gave them over to a reprobate mind. The word rendered *reprobate* signifies, to be disapproved, rejected, cast away, and is used in reference to that part of metals which is drossy and worthless. The natural consequence of a soul being rejected of God is its becoming undiscerning, void of judgment, and morally insensible. How greatly the heathen nations were destitute of discernment in religious truth, and how wofully their moral feelings were impaired and blunted, the history of their impiety, idolatry, and shocking depravity, clearly proves. We cannot help wondering how, with the understanding and reason with which man is endowed, they were capable of acting as if they had been totally void of both, in deifying birds, and beasts, and the works of their own hands.

As the consequence of their having been given over to an insensible mind, they did those things which are not convenient; that is, those things which are not befitting or becoming their rational powers, the relations in which they stand to God, their Creator, moral Governor, and Judge, and their high destination as immortal beings. This is a form of expression used to denote what is most enormous and detestable; and intimates that the passions in which the heathen indulged, and the immoralities which they freely committed, were of a nature the most monstrous and inhuman. They laboured to efface every trace of the glorious Original from which they sprung, to cut off their connexion with the living and true God, and while gratifying the lusts of their own hearts, to promote the designs, and to do the works of the devil. But let us notice—

IV. The actual extent of their immorality. To their impiety in not only neglecting the duties which they owed to God, but in doing dishonour to his perfections and government, I have already alluded. Where love to God is wanting, and an earnest endeavour to give Him that worship and obedience which his law requires, there is an inlet to all depravity, and an incapacity to discharge aright the duties which we owe our neighbours and ourselves. The heathen nations, accordingly, were filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity,—and all the other vices and crimes which the apostle enumerates in this catalogue. They were not only

guilty of these vices and crimes, but they were *filled* with them.

This gross and universal depravity, we are taught, by the highest authority, to trace to the corruption of the heart. “ Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” In the heathen world many of the restraints which are laid on this fountain in the lands where the light of revelation shines were withdrawn, and it therefore sent forth without obstruction its polluted streams. Here, fallen man shewed himself in his natural character, as alienated from God, as darkened in his understanding, and corrupted in his heart, the servant of sin, the subject and the slave of Satan, the very vassal of his lusts and pleasures, the child of disobedience, and the despiser of the riches of the divine goodness and forbearance. The gods which he worshipped, the affections which he exhibited, the deeds which he wrought, the kingdom which he advanced, shewed how widely and exclusively the prince of this world had established his dominion over him.

It is not necessary to dwell on every particular enumerated by the apostle. We shall select a few of the crimes stated, and shew that the most civilized of the heathen nations were generally guilty of them, and encouraged to their practice by the constitutions, laws, customs, and opinions that prevailed among them. They were authorised by their religion and their laws, and committed without reserve by their legislators and philosophers.

The Apostle begins with unrighteousness, or injustice, because he had already taken notice of the sins committed against the first table of the law, and was now about to detail the offences against the second. Hence, nearly all that follows may be explained as denoting a species of injustice committed in regard to others and ourselves. Unrighteousness is the generic term, which comprehends under it the various kinds of it that are afterwards mentioned,—fornication, which refers to the violation of chastity ; wickedness, to a delight in mischief, and a disposition to injure others by craft ; covetousness, to violence and oppression in regard to property ; maliciousness, to that ill-will that prompts to revenge ; envy, to the honour and prosperity of others ; murder, to the injury done to their lives ; debate or contention, to a disregard to their peace or their opinions ; deceit, to the seeming to be in regard to them what in reality we are not ; malignity, to indifference as to their misery, or even delighting in the production of it ;—whisperers, it is supposed, are those who secretly speak evil of persons when they are present ; and backbiters, as distinguished from them, are those who both speak evil of others to their face, and circulate slanders and calumnies to ruin their characters. The term, “haters of God,” refers not only to their enmity to the laws and perfections of the holy and the living God, but to the violence and persecutions with which they followed all who attempted to honour and serve him. Their disposition towards the Jews, and their treatment of the first Christians, furnish illustrations of the truth

with which the Apostle had in this respect described them. The expression "despiteful" may be rendered insolent, and refers to their unjust and violent oppression of their inferiors and others. They were also proud, boastful, inventors of evil things, and employed their ingenuity in discovering new methods of dishonouring God, and of indulging in cruelty and sensual gratifications. They were disobedient to parents, without understanding, and acted as if they were incapable of discerning between truth and error, between good and evil. They were covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful. They did these things, at least their legislators, priests, and philosophers, did these things, and encouraged others in their practice, while they knew that they were deserving of condemnation and death. In place of acting agreeably to the knowledge which they possessed, they stifled their convictions, gave way without restraint and without concealment to the most criminal passions, and honoured and deified those who had been grossly guilty of them.

But that we may have a more vivid impression of the enormity of the crimes committed in the heathen world, that is, by the whole world of mankind except the Jews, it is necessary to illustrate at greater length two or three of the particulars included in the Apostle's enumeration. I shall say nothing more of their uncleanness and impurity than that they were universally abandoned to it, and sunk to the extreme of corruption both in their notions and practice. As to their murderous and unmerciful disposition, their pub-

lic and private history, in as far as we are acquainted with it, furnishes the most ample evidence. The conduct of the Lacedemonians towards their slaves, who were regarded as the common property of the state, and whom any one might injure with impunity, is revolting to every feeling of humanity. To prevent them from growing too numerous or powerful, it was a part of their policy to massacre them, on certain occasions, in cold blood, and without the slightest provocation. At one time, two thousand of them, whom they had armed for the defence of the state, and by whose fidelity they were materially assisted in bringing the war in which they were engaged to a conclusion, were deliberately and cruelly destroyed. Nor did the Romans treat their slaves with greater humanity. They very frequently sent those who were sick, or infirm, or old, into an island in the Tyber, where they were left to perish. It is affirmed by respectable historians, that they sometimes ordered them to be drowned in fish-ponds, that the fish might be more delicate.

I shall say nothing of the cruelty and carnage that accompanied their wars, undertaken from ambition, and conducted without a regard to justice ; nor of the indiscriminate slaughter which so often followed on their taking a city ; nor of the custom of ordering the most distinguished of their prisoners, after employing them to grace their triumphal entrance, to be put to death. Their public amusements, which were attended by all ranks, and by the most illustrious females, are sufficient to convict them of being what the Apostle styles them, murderers and unmerciful. In their

gladiatory shows, they beheld human beings fight with each other, or with wild beasts, till hundreds were killed before them. When we remember that these diversions were exhibited on almost all public occasions, and provided to the multitude by all who wished to acquire or retain popularity,—that they were frequent in all parts of the Roman empire, and eagerly sought after by all classes, we may form some notion of the extent to which inhumanity prevailed, and of the number of lives that were sacrificed for pleasure. It is estimated that a greater number of men was killed in these cruel sports, throughout the provinces, than was slaughtered in war.

That the heathen in general, and the more refined of them in particular, were often led to subdue their natural affection, and to exhibit on many occasions a total want of it, is clear, from the mode in which parents treated their children, and in which parents, in their turn, were dealt with by their own offspring. Among the Lacedemonians, the father was obliged by the laws, to bring his child to be examined by the men of his tribe ; and if after viewing the infant they found it weakly or deformed, they caused it to be destroyed. The Romans were allowed by law, to destroy all their female children but the eldest ; and it appears that parents of the best character availed themselves of this permission. Eminent philosophers, Plato, Aristotle, and others, prescribed or approved this unnatural practice. Thus were mankind taught by law and by philosophy, to offer violence to one of the strongest and best affections of the heart, and to

reckon that the taking away of the lives of their children was not a crime. In like manner was it the custom in several ancient nations for children to expose or destroy their sick or aged parents, under the pretence that this was better for them than to wait for their natural death. I shall lay no stress on Nero's murdering his mother Agrippina, because Nero was a monster of depravity ; but the reader of ancient history will meet with numerous examples to prove, that the heathen nations shewed a deficiency in natural affection.

They were also implacable. They were strangers to that disposition to forgive those who injure us, which the Gospel inculcates. Some of their philosophers considered it pusillanimous not to retaliate ; and in practice, all exhibited the spirit of revenge. They would not allow that forgiving mercy could form any part of a perfect character. They were not less deficient in general benevolence. With what cruelty and barbarity did the Greeks and Romans, especially the former, treat all other nations ! And how common was it for the Gentiles, both as nations and as individuals, to be covenant-breakers, to be deceitful, false, and fraudulent, indifferent as to the means, provided they could attain their end. The most virtuous and the wisest of their philosophers taught them, that lying is lawful when it is profitable, and consequently led them to make light of their most solemn engagements.

It is somewhat remarkable, that with all this depravity they should have been distinguished, more

especially their learned men, for their pride and self-sufficiency. They were accustomed to speak of themselves as being on an equality with the gods, and in one thing to excel even the gods, their being wise and good by their own choice. What can be conceived more boastful and assuming than the following strain of a stoical philosopher: "I am excellent in wisdom; I have performed many difficult labours; I have vanquished pleasures; I have vanquished riches; I have vanquished ambition; I have wrestled against and subdued cowardice and flattery. Fear and intemperance have nothing to say against me; sorrow is afraid of me. For these things am I crowned by myself, as being my own master, and under my own command. I shall not build altars to others, but others to me." I would now observe,

I. That this survey of the impiety, idolatry, and gross immorality of the heathen world shews the universal depravity of mankind. It is true, the Apostle has only hitherto applied his charge of universal depravity to the Gentiles; but we should be entitled to conclude, (even though he had not proved the same charge against the Jews in the following chapter,) that the corruption which pervaded the whole heathen world, was the corruption which is natural to man. A cause whose operation was so invariable, whose effects reached every individual and all classes, and which were exhibited in the most monstrous idolatry and immorality, must be universal. It was not confined to any age or country, but common to all,—acquiring greater strength as mankind advanced,—

prompting them to efface from their nature all that yet remained of the image of Him that made them,—and converting a world, which the voice of the Creator had once pronounced to be very good, into the theatre of impiety and crime, and wide-spreading ruin and death. These, though only some of the evidences, incontrovertibly prove, that all mankind are fallen and apostate,—that they are in a state of rebellion against God,—that they are exposed to his displeasure, and under his righteous condemnation,—and that every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. “What, then, are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin, as it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one. There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one *.”

Numerous and revolting as were the vices and crimes which filled the heathen world, they were only streams issuing from the polluted fountain of human nature. The heart which is their source we carry along with us; and the highest authority has declared this heart to be deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;—to be enmity against God, and not subject to his law. And the alarming consideration that we are thus depraved,—that we have spiritually and morally undone and destroyed our-

* Rom. iii. 10—20.

selves,—that we have brought down upon us the wrath of that God from whose presence and power no swiftness can flee,—the consideration should awaken us to earnest concern and inquiry.

II. The depravity and guilt of nominal christians are not less aggravated than were those of the heathen. Some, indeed, have made it the ground of an objection to the divine authority of christianity, that its efficacy has not been made more manifest in restraining iniquity. They allege that crimes as atrocious have been committed under its profession as have ever been perpetrated under the darkness of heathenism. Admitting it were so, what could it prove against the truth and divine authority of a religion which denounces the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men ; and which teaches its disciples by the most powerful obligations and motives to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly and righteously in the world ?

The existence of so much impiety and unrighteousness, fraud and oppression, under the light of the Gospel, prove, indeed, the universal corruption of human nature ;—corruption which continues and abounds in resistance to its invitations, promises, warnings, and threatenings,—and which, though its gross abominations are forced by our laws and customs into dark recesses, sufficiently shews its dominion and inveteracy. But how much more aggravated is the guilt of those who give way to it under our advantages, than that of the heathen ! The light of revelation

enables us clearly to read that same book of nature which was open to them, but which seems to have been hid in obscurity. We have afforded to us a bright discovery of the unity, character, and perfections of the living and true God ;—of what he is, as the Lord God merciful and gracious, and abundant in goodness and truth ; and we have a still more intimate and affecting manifestation of his glory in the person of his own Son, who is the image of the invisible God, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person. This divine Being gives us the knowledge of God, not by words only, but by actions, by his assumption of human nature, by his taking upon him the form of a servant, by his life of obedience to the will of God,—and by his humbling himself, and becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. He presents to our view the excellency and suitableness of his offices as a Saviour, and offers us that great salvation from sin, and death, which he has wrought out. His large and unlimited invitations of mercy are adapted to the guilt and helplessness of a rebellious and perishing world. “ I come not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. The son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.”

But have these manifold mercies been improved ? How many are there, who, though restrained by public opinion, and by the laws, from those excesses which were common among the Gentiles, are filled with all unrighteousness, and prove that their hearts and their

lives are away from the love and the obedience that are due to God ! There are none among us who worship idols of wood and stone ; but how many are there who live without God ;—who feel a painful restraint in being subject to his authority ;—who prosecute their business or their pleasure as if he were not entitled to be consulted, and as if he had no right to interfere with their pursuits,—and who, in their whole lives, are practically saying unto God, “ Depart from us ; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what profit should we have if we pray unto him ? ”

How numerous are they in christian lands, and among ourselves, who, though they do not worship idols in the same way as the heathen, agree with them in overlooking, neglecting, and dishonouring the living and true God ! Are there none who are haters of God, and as the evidence of it, live in the total neglect of prayer, who despise the ordinances of religion, who flee from all that bears the signature of heaven, as they would from an enemy, and whose unconstrained habits of criminal self-indulgence leave them neither leisure nor inclination to commune with the mighty God who gives them life, and breath, and all things ? Lest they should be reminded of this state of moral insensibility ; lest any circumstance should awaken in their hearts any feeling of gratitude to Him whose mercies continually sustain them, they arrest not the course of their pleasures, and but as little as possible of their business on the day which God has commanded us to remember and keep holy. They willingly forget God,

and flee from every symbol of his presence. They not only live without God in the world, but retire from the means that might awaken their consciences, and convince them of their sin.

III. It appears from this subject that man—every man, stands in need of a great and mighty Saviour. Into what an abyss of depravity, and guilt, and misery has he fallen! How delusive and pernicious is the notion which many persist in entertaining, that they have still something about themselves to which they may cling—that their virtues when weighed with their vices preponderate,—that God is not so severe as to deal rigorously with his creatures on account of their imperfections,—and, therefore, that they have cause to soothe their minds with the hope that all is well with them. I would tell them from the word of God, not only that they are sinners, but that in their natural state, and while unregenerate, their hearts and their lives are full of sin, and that their whole course is a continued dishonour to God. Could we convince them of this; and that their condition is as much that of helpless, and lost, and ruined creatures, as that of the Gentiles who were filled with all unrighteousness, how would they at once relinquish every hope of obtaining acceptance on the footing of their own merits, and with what earnestness would they inquire what must they do to be saved?

IV. This survey of the state of the heathen world also teaches us that piety to God is essential to morality.

CHAPTER XVI.

PIETY TO GOD AN ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLE OF TRUE
VIRTUE.

UNDERSTANDING and will are necessary to constitute a being a moral and an accountable agent. These qualifications form their possessor the subject of praise or blame, of reward or punishment. Without intelligence, an agent could not act with a designed reference to law, or propose an object to himself in his conduct; and without will, or liberty to act, and of refraining from acting, he cannot be accountable.

That the will of God is the only rule of moral feeling and conduct has been already shewn. But there remains a question of great importance for our consideration, namely, what is the end which we are bound to propose to ourselves in all our conduct; or, in other words, what, in order to constitute our actions virtuous, must be our leading design in their performance?

It is quite obvious, that before we can decide as to the morality of an action, we must ascertain the nature of the principle from which it proceeds. It may, as to its outward form, be good and beneficial, and yet the agent in its performance be totally void of a virtuous principle. The doings of an individual who is gratifying his pride, or ambition, or selfishness, may be highly conducive to the welfare of the community; though, it must be evident, they have nothing in them of true virtue. “ If two individuals were to expose

themselves to the same peril, and if we could be made to understand, that the one had no other motive for this apparently generous exposure, than the wish of securing a certain amount of happiness to himself, at some time, either near or remote ; the other, no motive but that of saving a life which was dearer to him than his own ;—the action in both cases is the same,—but in which case would our feelings of moral approbation more strongly arise ?”

“ The miser, whose sordid parsimony we scorn, exhibits in his whole life, at least, as much mortification of sensual appetite, as the most abstemious hermit, whose voluntary penance we pity and almost respect. The seeming patriot, who, even in the pure ranks of those generous guardians of the public who sincerely defend the freedom and happiness of the land which they love, is a patriot, perhaps, most unwillingly, because he has no other prospect of sharing that public corruption at which he rails, will still expose the corruption with as much ardour as if he truly thought the preservation of the liberty of his country a more desirable thing than an office in the treasury. If we were to watch minutely the external actions of a very skilful hypocrite for half a day, it is possible that we might not discover one, in which the secret passion within burst through its disguise ; yet, if we had reason before to regard him as a hypocrite, the very closeness of the resemblance of his actions, in every external circumstance, to those of virtue, would only excite still more our indignation *.”

The action is either virtuous or vicious just as the

* Brown's Lectures, vol. iii. p. 575.

mind of the agent is virtuous or vicious in its performance. The action takes its character from the motives and dispositions which lead to its accomplishment. This is a fundamental, and I may add, an incontrovertible axiom in morals.

What are the motives and dispositions which are necessary to constitute an agent and his conduct virtuous? Love to God and to our fellow-creatures is all that the divine law requires, and, consequently, when exercised to the extent which is due, is sufficient to render us pure and holy, or rather, is itself purity and holiness; but as God claims to be loved with the whole heart, and above all other objects, his glory must be the leading, the chief end which we propose to ourselves in our pursuits and conduct. It is only when a moral agent voluntarily aims at this as the great purpose of his being, and designs its advancement in all that he does, that he fulfils the end for which he was made, or, in other words, that he is truly virtuous.

It is not necessary here to define what is meant by the glory of God. It is the riches, the infinite fulness of the divine nature, which God himself contemplates with complacency, and which, we are assured, is closely connected with his blessedness. He has manifested the inexhaustible riches of his power, wisdom, justice, goodness, and mercy, in giving being and happiness to the universe; and, more especially, in the restoration of being and happiness in a peculiar way to sinful creatures. The excellences of God, either in himself, or as displayed to the view of intelligent beings, are his glory, in comparison of which, the whole creation is less than nothing, and vanity.

Revelation affirms that this is the ultimate end for which all things have been made ; which the dispensations of providence are to subserve ; and which the new creation, the work of redeeming mercy, is designed to illustrate. “Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power : for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” Every part of the divine procedure, whether it be the exercise of creating, of preserving, or of redeeming power and goodness, has for its final object the manifestation and the furtherance of the glory of God. This is the object for which man has been so richly endowed, and which he is commanded voluntarily to promote. This design he is ever to keep in view in the minutest parts of his conduct. “Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.—Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.—Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

CHAPTER XVII.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN ACTING FROM A SUPREME REGARD TO
THE GLORY OF GOD.

If it be the duty of man to have a supreme regard in all his conduct to the glory of God, it may be asked, what is included in his acting thus, or what are the things implied in his being influenced by this as a

leading principle? It is clear, that it implies love to God,—an uniform reference to his will as our rule,—and a designed subserviency to his glory as our end.

I. Love to God is essentially necessary to our being properly affected with a concern for his glory; so much so, that the possession of it in the degree required, would ensure the exercise of the principles of a pure and holy conduct. When the heart is filled and regulated by the love of delight and complacency in God as the most holy and the best of Beings;—and of good will to him as infinitely deserving of all the benevolent and reverential affection of which we are capable;—and of gratitude to him as the Author of our being, of our powers, of our mercies, and of the eternity of happiness which he has taught us to look for;—it is needless to say, that the honour of God, in his character, authority, and government, will exert, as a principle of action, an entire supremacy over the man. What, indeed, is zeal for the divine glory but love to God, in some measure corresponding to the infinitude of his excellences, and of his claims, and leading to a cordial co-operation with him in advancing the happiness of the universe? In proportion as this love predominates, will the motives and dispositions be pure, and the nature and conduct be virtuous.

II. The supremacy of the principle in question, implies an uniform reference to the will of God as our rule. This alone is the infallible standard and measure of all virtuous feeling and conduct. It is only by an appeal to this, therefore, that we can ascertain whether our dispositions and actions come under this character.

Before we feel concern in the honour of any one, there must be a similarity of views, and some conformity of will. We cannot glorify God unless his will, in whatever way that is revealed, be the delight of our heart, and the rule of our lives. All outward services, though they may unintentionally, on the part of the agent, tend to the furtherance of the divine glory, or be overruled for its advancement, are, of course, nothing in his sight, without the inward principle of obedience. Without this, to give character to the action, the possession of the most amiable disposition, and the constitutional benevolence of a whole life, will not vindicate us from the charge of living without God. If there be not in the heart an habitual desire to submit to the will of God as our Maker and Owner, and to obey him as our great Lord and Governor, and to rest in Him as our ultimate end and object, we are neglecting the design of our being, and consequently are not acting virtuously.

The man who believes that the will of God is wise and good, and who places himself and all that concerns him for time and eternity at its disposal, regulates his powers, talents, relations, and prospects, according to its decisions. He endeavours to bring the thoughts and affections of his heart, and the whole course of his life into obedience to this authority; and aims both at the doing and the suffering all that it may please God to appoint for him. In consequence of this habitual reference to the divine will, he lives as in the immediate presence of God, and looks to his glory as the ultimate end of all that he does.

III. Before we can supremely seek the advance-

ment of the glory of God, there must be an *intentional* consecration of ourselves to this object. It is to the voluntary co-operation and service of moral agents, directed to this end, that God attaches any value; because that alone renders themselves and their services virtuous. That in all their doings there should be a *designed* subserviency to God and to his glory, is clear, both from the nature of the case, and from the language of Scripture. "Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.—Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.—Glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are his."

We may receive credit from a fellow-creature, when our conduct accords with his inclinations, though we never seriously designed to please him; but we cannot so impose on a Being who claims the heart as his right, and whose omniscience discerns how far this claim is complied with. The actions which cannot please an earthly friend, as proofs of affection, when he knows that they were neither begun nor ended with any design of pleasing him, cannot be acceptable, when performed in a similar manner to God.

Are not those actions truly virtuous, it will be asked, which proceed from the moral feelings of our nature, even though they should not be performed with an immediate view to the authority and glory of God? Is not the action of the dutiful child, who instinctively exerts its strength in relieving the necessities of an aged parent, though in performing this duty it should never think of the will of the Deity, pleasing in the

sight of Him who has commanded children to honour their father and mother? Is not the conduct of the man, who yields to the gentle emotions of humanity, by hastening to the house of mourning, to console and animate the sufferers, in conformity to the will of God and agreeable to him, though the authority of God should not have been in all his thoughts? Does the most virtuous being on earth think of the Almighty, of his will as his rule, and of his glory as his ultimate end, every time he performs a beneficent action? Is this compatible with the weakness of humanity? Could it have been uniformly practised by prophets and apostles?—In reply to this, I remark,—

That there are certain affections in our nature which are common to us with the inferior animals. To these I have already alluded, and do not intend to recur to them. The exercise of some of them is doubtless most beautiful, whether in the human species, or in the brute creation. They have a softening influence upon man; and though they are not entitled to the sacred name of virtue, when the actions to which they lead are performed apart from intelligence and design, they may be considered as important auxiliaries to it. It is not possible to witness the fondness with which the young of all animals are regarded by those who have been instrumental in giving them being, without interest. The mother, when she hangs sleepless, night after night, over the cradle of her sick infant, even though she does not think for a single moment, that it is for the good of mankind, and agreeable to the will of heaven, that she should act thus, does what is in itself most lovely and pleasing, just

because she is exhibiting, in her patience and tenderness, the strength of an affection which the great Parent of all has rendered natural. Why should it be thought strange that a woman could forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb, if there be not instinctive feelings in human nature which lead to an opposite conduct? "When we enter some wretched hovel, and see that wretchedness, which is so much more dreadful to the eye of him who beholds it, than to the ear of him who is told in his splendid apartment, that there is misery upon the earth;—when we look through the darkness to which there is no sunshine, on some corner, darker still,—where the father of those who have strength only to hang over him and weep, is giving to them his last blessing, which is all that remains to him to give," do we not, from instinctive compassion, as if led by the hand of Him that made us, hasten to afford whatever relief is in our power? The exercise of this compassion is pleasing as it is beneficial; but if it be not under the direction of intelligence and design, on what ground is it better entitled to the name of virtue than the exercise of similar affections in the lower animals?

"But the question is," say they who oppose the doctrine which I am attempting to establish, "not whether it be virtue to conform our will to that of the Deity, when that will is revealed to us, or clearly implied,—for of this there can be no doubt. It is, whether there be not in our nature, a principle of moral approbation, from which our feelings of obligation, virtue, and merit flow; and which operates, not independently of the divine will, indeed, for it was the

divine will that implanted in us this very principle,—but without the necessary consideration, at the time, of the expression of the divine will; and, consequently, without any intentional conformity to it or disobedience. The mother, though she should, at the moment, forget altogether that there is a God in nature, would still turn with moral horror from the thought of murdering the little prattler who is sporting at her knee; and who is not more beautiful to her eye by external charms and graces, than beautiful to her heart by the thousand tendernesses which every day and almost every hour is developing; while the child, who, perhaps, has scarcely heard that there is a God, or who, at least, is ignorant of any will of God, in conformity with which virtue consists, is still, in his very ignorance, developing those moral feelings which are supposed to be inconsistent with such ignorance. Of all the mothers, who at this moment, on the earth, are exercised, and virtuously exercised, in maternal duties around the cradles of their infants, there is, perhaps, not one who is thinking, that God has commanded her to love her offspring, and to perform for them the many offices of love that are necessary for preserving the lives which are so dear to her. The expression of the Divine Will, indeed, not only gives us new and nobler duties to perform,—it gives a new and nobler delight also to the very duties which our nature prompts;—but still there are duties which our nature prompts; and the violation of which is felt as moral wrong, even when God is known and worshipped, only as a demon of power, still less benevolent than the very barbarians who howl around his altar in

their savage sacrifice. But for the principle of moral approbation which the Divine Being has fixed in our nature, the expression of his will would itself have no *moral* power, whatsoever physical pain or pleasure it might hold out to our prudent choice*."

To this I answer, that the exercise of these maternal affections, to which there is here an allusion, is always pleasing, because they are pleasurable in the very exercise, and because the want of them is unnatural and monstrous; but if virtue be the product of the understanding and will, and confer praise or blame, merit or demerit, on the agent, I see not on what ground the mere instinctive exercise of those affections which are common to us with the lower animals, should be dignified with that sacred appellation. There is virtue in the exercise of our feelings and faculties only when they are *intentionally* made subservient to the great and ultimate end of our being.

There are, indeed, moral feelings and principles in human nature, otherwise man would not be a moral agent, and, consequently, would be incapable of obeying the will of God. From his original endowments, he would exhibit the great outlines of character belonging to a moral and accountable being, though he were totally ignorant of God, and of the relations which he bears to him; but his yielding to the moral or other instincts of his nature, as he yields to any animal impulse, without design and without end, whatever amiability it gives to his outward deportment, does not, as it appears to me, confer upon him true moral worth. That is only to be acquired by

* Brown's Lectures, vol. iv. p. 108.

the voluntary and intentional act of an intelligent being, performed with a view to a suitable end. "No affection whatsoever to any creature, which is not dependent on, nor subordinate to, a propensity of the heart to God, the Supreme and Infinite Being, can be of the nature of true virtue."

My meaning is not, that in every good or virtuous action which the christian performs, he thinks, while performing it, on God, and on his authority. Such is the imperfection of human nature, that many of those labours of love, which, we are assured, are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ, are performed without an immediate reference to the divine will, which has enjoined them. Whether the incapacity of immediately attending to the will and glory of God in every action that man performs, is owing to the limited nature of his faculties, or to the moral imperfections of his nature, it is unnecessary to determine; the fact is unquestionable.

As he who enters on a journey for the sake of his friend, affords evidence by every step which he advances, of the love which he bears to him, even when his friend, and the purpose for which he began his journey, are not always in his thoughts; so he who has conscientiously devoted himself to God, in the way of his appointment, who subordinates his actions and his pursuits to his glory, and who endeavours habitually to feel that love which he requires, indicates throughout the tenour of his conduct, the governing power of those principles of self-dedication to the divine will, and supreme regard to the divine authority, which distinguish the truly virtuous. There is a

fixed purpose in the mind, which is strengthened by frequent renewal, of acting as under the immediate inspection of God, and of employing talents, opportunities, and necessary though worldly avocations, agreeably to his will, and to the furtherance of his praise.

“The outward conformity,” observes the celebrated Howe, “abstractly considered, can never be thought characteristical and distinguishing of the heirs of blessedness. The worst of men may perform the best of outward duties. The most glorious boasted virtues, if they grow not from the proper root, love to God, are but splendid sins*.”

It is no objection to this doctrine, that there is in human nature a principle of moral approbation, a sense of right and of wrong, which leads to certain actions useful to individuals and to society. For, this principle of moral approbation, or conscience, operates, and often very powerfully, in minds in which there is no true virtue. Is there not frequently the most painful remorse, arising from a vivid perception of duty and obligation, and a sense of the desert of him who violates them,—where there is no hatred of sin, and no love of holiness? It is not necessary that the disposition of the heart should be virtuous in order to feel the injustice, and to see and fear the consequence, of being opposed to the authority of heaven. Of these the wicked, even in this life, have often such lively perceptions as to make the thoughts of God, and judgment, and eternity, insupportable to them.

Does not revelation teach us, that there is a day approaching, in which all shall stand before the judg-

* Howe's Works, vol. iii. p. 156.

ment-seat of God, when the judge shall so convince sinners of the evil of their sins, that their mouths will be stopped, and their own conscience will second and approve the justice of their dreadful sentence? But how different will this approval be from that of true virtue, which loves and fears God, and delights in his holiness? They have, indeed, an overwhelming sense of the righteousness of God, and of the desert of transgression; but they have as strong an aversion to holiness, and as great an aptitude and longing for the practice of sin as before. If the exercise of the principle of moral approbation and disapprobation, or conscience, implied the possession of virtue, then would they be virtuous whose consciences shall be awakened on that great and terrible day of the Lord to the most perfect discharge of their duty. We know, on the contrary, that the measure of their iniquity will then be full, and that their depravity, as well as their guilt, will exclude them from the blissful presence of God.

We are exceedingly apt to mistake the sensibility of the principle of moral approbation, or, of conscience, for true virtue, because the workings of this presiding power of our nature shew, that the mind is not thoroughly hardened. Experience teaches us, that the tendency of sin is to deaden its sensibilities; and when we observe evidence of its being in exercise; approving of certain actions as virtuous, and of other actions as vicious, we are apt, without further inquiry, to take for granted the existence of virtue.

This is the natural operation of the moral faculty; and has nothing more of virtue in it than the natural operations of the understanding, or of the memory, or

of the principle of association, or of any other of the powers with which the Creator has endowed us. It is indeed called the moral faculty, and the moral sense ; but this does not necessarily infer that its possessor is a holy and virtuous being ; it only signifies that he was originally formed for virtue, and has the capacity of becoming virtuous. All that we can justly infer from its lively exercise is, that the person who is its subject has not reached that extreme wickedness which stupifies and deadens the conscience.

Besides, it should ever be kept in mind, that the affection or state of mind which we call virtuous is essentially one and the same. The love of God, and of our neighbour, is the same pure affection, different only in regard to the different beings who are its objects. But can this affection have any place in him who does not love God supremely, who does not intentionally make his will his rule, and whose ultimate end in all things is not his glory ? If he is void of love towards the greatest and infinitely the best Being, he must be destitute of virtuous affection towards his fellow-creatures, that is, destitute of all true virtue. He may have, from mere selfishness, or from some other motive, equally worthless, thought on the duties which he owes to his neighbour, and he may have acted in conformity to his thoughts ; but as he has lived to the exclusion of God, and has not only neglected the duties which he owes him, but has discharged those which he owes to man without consecrating them by a regard to the divine glory, have not the actions of his life, however useful to society, been performed with views and principles as entirely unconnected with the name and authority of God, as if

these had no real existence? We cannot bring ourselves to believe, that *he* gives to God the first place in his heart, who lives willingly unmindful of him, who acts as if he were not, who regards the annunciation of his will as a disagreeable interference, and who wishes to shun his presence as he would an unwelcome obtruder; and if he loves not God, neither, whatever be the decencies of his outward character, does he love his neighbour as himself.

It does not in the slightest degree affect the truth of this statement, that mankind act, and are apparently virtuous, under the influence of those affections and principles which God has implanted in human nature, though there be no intentional conformity to the divine will. Does it prove that they are virtuous, that in place of opposing, they yield to instinctive affections of their nature, and that under the direction of these impulsive feelings, they perform many actions truly lovely and useful? From the mere force of natural affection, which the Creator for wise ends has impressed on the mind of man, parents love their children, and children love their parents. From instinct mankind are led to pity those whom they see in distress, and thus become humane from the exercise of mere natural feeling. Excited by this feeling, the tear of sensibility flows from the same eye, which could behold with malice and envy the prosperity of him whose sufferings awaken compassion. Had it proceeded from the affection of pure benevolence, it would have led not only to pity the distressed, and to relieve him, but to rejoice in whatever tended to the furtherance of his happiness.

Men would not so generally confound the mere operations of natural instincts and affections with true virtue, were it not that there is often a near resemblance between them. Both are pleasing in their exercise to the possessor, and beneficial to mankind. The effect of both is to diminish the sum of human wickedness and misery. The direct tendency of natural affection, of natural compassion, and of the operation of natural conscience, is to restrain sin, to soften the habits and manners, and very greatly to add to human enjoyment. None can question that the immediate tendency of the exercise of virtue is to produce the same results, and to a much greater extent.

We are apt, from another cause, to confound the operation of natural affection with true virtue, and to call the former by the name of the latter; our natural affections and principles, when exercised under the influence of supreme love to God, and regard to his glory, become truly virtuous. All the instinctive feelings of human nature, the love of parents to children, and of children to parents, of relations, neighbours, kindred, and country,—compassion to the distressed, gratitude to benefactors, and the exercise of conscience as a directing and governing power, are now holy. Let this single affection of love to God be introduced into the mind, and it gives a new character to all the acts of the will, to all the feelings of the heart, and to the operation of the instinctive principles of our nature. It was doubtless to this important change, which philosophy no less than religion declares to be necessary, that the Apostle alluded, when

he said,—“ If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”

But that there is nothing of real virtue in the operation of natural instincts and affections is very obvious. That only, it must be allowed by all, is virtuous which proceeds from virtuous principle. The effect cannot be of a nature different from the cause. The stream does not possess qualities more excellent than the fountain. Mere natural and instinctive affection, however varied may be its results, however beautiful, and useful, and necessary, is totally different in nature from that product of the will and the understanding, acting with a reference to the noblest objects, which we call virtue.

“ If God has given to man a power which we call conscience, the moral faculty, the sense of duty, by which, when he comes to years of understanding, he perceives certain things that depend on his will to be his duty, and other things to be base and unworthy; if the notion of duty be a simple conception of its own kind, and of a different nature from the conceptions of utility and agreeableness, of interest or reputation; if this moral faculty be the prerogative of man, and no vestige of it be found in brute animals; if it be given us by God to regulate all our animal affections and passions; if to be governed by it be the glory of man and the image of God in the soul, and to disregard its dictates be his dishonour and depravity: I say, if these things be so, to seek the foundation of morality in the affections which we have in common with the brutes, is to seek the living among the dead,

and to change the glory of man, and the image of God in his soul, into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.

“A dog has a tender concern for her puppies; so has a man for his children. The natural affection is the same in both. But why do we impute moral virtue to the man on account of this concern, and not to the dog? The reason surely is, that in the man the natural affection is accompanied with a sense of duty, but in the dog it is not. The same thing may be said of all the kind affections common to us with the brutes. They are amiable qualities; but they are not moral virtues*.”

“Whatever we do, we should perform it,” says the profound and eloquent Barrow, “with this formal reference, as his servants, from conscience of the duty we owe to him; with intention therein to serve him, in expectation of a reward only from him.—So that St. Paul enjoins us, that whatever we do, we perform it heartily as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that from the Lord we shall receive the recompence of the inheritance.—In fine, all our actions should, in our intention, be works of religion, dedicated to God’s service and honour; sacrifices, as it were, of gratitude and homage to God; so they ought all to be offered up in the name of Jesus†.”

“To constitute true christian virtue,” says Dr. Beattie, “good affections, disposing to good actions, and accompanied too with a sense of duty, are not sufficient without the aid of another principle, and

* Reid’s *Essays*; Essay v. chap. v. vol. iii. p. 495.

† Vol. iii. p. 7

that is piety. The love of God ought continually to predominate in the mind, and give, to every act of duty, grace and animation. Christians do what is right, not only because good affections prompt them to it, and because their conscience declares it to be incumbent; but also because they consider it as agreeable to the will of God, to please whom is ever their supreme desire*.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

REASONS ON WHICH THE DOCTRINE OF THE FOREGOING CHAPTER IS FOUNDED.

Thus it appears that the glory of God is the ultimate object which he has in view in all his works,—in the creation and preservation of the universe. It also appears to be the ultimate object of reference to all moral agents,—to the attainment of which they are bound to consecrate themselves. That this ought to be their chief end in all their conduct appears to me evident from the following considerations.

I. Because it is the end which God proposes to himself in all his works. Scripture, the only source whence we derive information on this head, does indeed speak of the communication of happiness as his ultimate end. There are numerous expressions which seem to intimate that God's object in imparting his goodness is the happiness of his creatures. “The

* Beattie's Moral Science.

Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people, for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you.—God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life.” To shew the unbounded delight and complacency with which God regards the felicity of his people, it is said,—“ The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will rejoice over thee with singing.”

These declarations, which shew forth the pleasure which God takes in the happiness of his creatures, are perfectly consistent with the position, that his ultimate end in all his works is his own glory. For what is the glory of God? It was before observed, that it is the riches, the infinite fulness of the divine nature, consisting in infinite knowledge, holiness, and happiness. That which is more especially called the glory of God is the manifestation of these; and particularly the communication of them to the creatures whom he has formed in his own image. “ The communication of his knowledge is chiefly in giving the knowledge of himself; the communication of his virtue or holiness, is principally in communicating the love of himself; and the communication of God’s joy and happiness consists chiefly in communicating to the creature that happiness and joy which consists in rejoicing in God, and in his glorious excellency; for in such joy God’s own happiness does principally consist. In these things, knowing God’s excellency,

loving God for it, and rejoicing in it; and in the exercise and expression of these, consists God's honour and praise. These are the sum of that emanation of divine fulness, called in Scripture, the glory of God.

“ Thus, we see that the great end of God's works, which is so variously expressed in scripture, is indeed but one; and this one end is most properly and comprehensively called, the glory of God. Though God in seeking this end seeks the creature's good; yet, therein appears his supreme regard to himself. The emanation or communication of the divine fulness, consisting in the knowledge of God, love to him, and joy in him, has relation indeed both to God and the creature. They have relation to God as their object; for the knowledge communicated is the knowledge of God; and the love communicated is the love of God; and the happiness communicated is joy in God. In the creature's knowing, loving, rejoicing in, and praising God, the glory of God is both exhibited and acknowledged; his fulness is received and returned. The refulgence shines upon the creature, and is reflected back to the luminary. The beams of glory come from God, are something of God, and are refunded back again to their original. So that the whole is of God, and in God, and to God; and he is the beginning, and the middle, and the end *.”

Now, it is clearly the will of God, that all the creatures to whom he has given the capacity of knowing, loving, and serving him, should voluntarily cooperate with himself in seeking and in advancing the same end. It is not enough that he can overrule all

* God's Chief End in Creation: Edward's Works, vol. 1. p. 528.

events and agencies so as ultimately to accomplish his own purpose,—that he can make even the wrath of man to praise him. For the virtue of intelligent beings consists in loving God, in delighting in his excellences, and in willingly proposing to themselves as their chief object, that which God has declared to be his. He, therefore, in commanding them to be fellow-workers together with God, is, in other words, commanding them to be holy and virtuous creatures, by pursuing and attaining the great ends of their being.

As God shews the holiness of his nature by his actings, by his works, by the manner in which he exercises and manifests his attributes, so are his creatures virtuous only as they are voluntary imitators of him. It is in this way that they are capable of being followers of him, and that he commands their obedience. “Be ye holy ; for I am holy. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children ; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us.” It is only as they obey this great law of their being,—a law which is enforced by all the relations in which they stand to God,—by a review of the great purposes for which they have been formed in his glorious image,—that they honour and glorify God.

Every thing is perfect only as it answers the end for which it was made. Man was made, man is preserved, and was redeemed, that he might *voluntarily* co-operate with his Maker in furthering his glory. Unless he intentionally does so, he falls from the rank which has been assigned him in the scale of moral

beings ; he becomes depraved, and a rebel against the mighty God who is the father of his spirit, the former of his body, the owner of his talents, interests, and property, of all that he is, and of all that belongs to him.

II. It is by a voluntary co-operation with God in seeking what he has declared to be his honour and glory, that mankind can be instrumental in furthering their own, and the general happiness. No man can be virtuous but as he is intentionally and willingly so ; and no one can be truly happy but as he is holy. Now, as there can be no doubt, that the great end of God's moral government is the happiness of his vast empire, in connexion with his own blessedness and glory, it is clear that we can only be virtuously instrumental in promoting this happiness, by making his will in every case our rule, and his honour our chief design. If we are only unintentional instruments of advancing his glory, we place ourselves on a level with the lower animals who act from instinct, and who, in complying with the instinctive affections of their nature, fulfil the appointment which the will of heaven has assigned to them. We not only, in this case, are not virtuous, but by pursuing other ends than those of God's glory, and by yielding to a supremacy different from his, a principle of dislike and enmity gathers strength in the heart, and we are placed in the fearful situation of those who are opposed to the will, the authority, and the honour of God.

While the obligations, arising from creation and providence, are numerous to engage us in the exer-

cise of intentionally glorifying God, the redemption of the cross presents motives to this the most touching and urgent. This is a restoration of our being after it had been forfeited by sin, and bought for us by the sufferings and death of God's own Son, and conveyed to us as the fruit and as the reward of his sacrifice. It is a covenant of mercy offering pardon and reconciliation to rebels, and a deliverance from wrath by a substitution of the Son of the Highest in their room. It is a proclamation from the Lord and Sovereign of the universe, announcing that "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and not imputing unto men their trespasses." On those who embrace the offered mercy, the most powerful obligation is laid to live to the glory of their reconciled God, and to shew forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.

The questions for our consideration are, Whether are we heartily devoted to the Redeemer, and are we living to ourselves or to him? On the solution of these questions, our everlasting state will be decided in the judgment of the great day. We cannot see his face in peace, nor enter into his kingdom, if we do not now most willingly give to God the supremacy and the pre-eminence, if we do not submit fully and cordially to his sovereignty, and if we do not engage in his service with our first and our best affections.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON THE QUESTION, WHAT ARE THE MEANS BY WHICH THE
DUTY ENJOINED MAY BE PRACTISED?

THE question which is naturally suggested to the reflecting mind by the foregoing observations is, What are the means which I should employ for enabling me to do all to the glory of God?

I shall not attempt a full solution of this question; but must satisfy myself with a few observations, which may aid our inquiries on the subject.

I. We should accustom ourselves to refer every event and every blessing to God. This is what, in general language, all profess to do: it is of importance that the habit should be formed which is implied in this acknowledgment. As the truth is unquestionable, why should we not give it that influence over our thoughts, feelings, and pursuits, which it is entitled to hold, and which it is our privilege to yield to it? In every mercy, in every trial, let us observe the hand of God, in whom we live, and move, and have our being.

II. Let us do every thing for God. Let every work be undertaken, every plan formed, with a designed subserviency to his will, and reference to his glory. Our secular avocations will thus be consecrated to their noblest ends by religion; and we shall accustom ourselves to do every thing, and to value every thing, only as it is calculated to advance the honour

of God. Our doing every thing for the great end of our being will thus become habitual to us; and we shall feel it to be as "our meat and drink to do the will of our heavenly Father."

III. Let us be regular in the offices of devotion. In these offices we more particularly realize the presence of God, and have a more sensible impression of our being in the view of Him who is invisible. The frequent and regular recurrence of such an impression must have the tendency of keeping us in mind of the purposes of our being, and of our accountableness to God for the use of every talent. It will also be the means of counteracting the effect which the world is so much calculated to produce on the mind; and of suggesting that the favour of God should be the object of our supreme solicitude.

IV. Let the offices of devotion be discharged, not merely regularly, but aright. They cannot be performed aright without lively impressions of the perfections of God, and of the only way in which we are authorized to worship him. "God is a Spirit, and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth." Hence the duty of cherishing, and more especially in devotional exercises, such affections as are suitable to the greatness, holiness, and mercy of God. It is only in this way that our regularity in the offices of devotion will be useful in leading us to do all things to the glory of God.

V. Let us habitually cherish a sense of our dependence upon God, and of our obligations to him. It is the absence of this sense of dependence and of obligation that makes the duty of keeping the glory of God

in view in every thing, so difficult to practice. Whereas, if we constantly felt, that we are indebted to God for all that we now have, or hope to enjoy, and that by no services can we ever express all that we owe to him, might we not justly expect that we should more readily think of the glory of God as the ultimate end of our actions ?

BOOK V.

ON THE DUTIES WHICH MEN OWE TO ONE ANOTHER.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THOUGH all the duties which, as moral agents, we are bound to perform, are duties which we owe to God, inasmuch as we discharge them in obedience to his will, and in subserviency to his glory, they admit of classification according to their immediate objects.

The duties of the second class, or those which we owe our fellow-creatures, may be classed under the following heads: benevolence; justice; the obligations involved in the constitution of mankind as male and female; and those which arise from the institution of society. Moralists, and more especially writers on jurisprudence, have called the duties of benevolence indeterminate, because force cannot be employed to ensure their practice; while they have styled those of justice determinate, because we may use force to secure ourselves against their violation. It should be remembered, however, that many, perhaps the greater part of our duties, in order to be performed aright, must be discharged under the combined operation of benevolence and justice. The obliga-

tions that arise out of the benevolent feelings and principles of our nature, are just as binding, since they are enjoined by the authority of conscience and of God, as those which are founded upon right and equity. Has not a benefactor a right to a return of gratitude from those on whom he bestows his gifts? Yet he has no power to force the person whom he has obliged to render it. Benevolence, as well as justice, requires that children be affectionately educated by their parents, and that parents be treated with kindness and reverence by their children; but if these claims be resisted, how are they to be enforced?

“The terms right and duty, are, in the strictest sense, in morality at least, corresponding and commensurable. Whatever service it is my duty to do to any one, he has a moral right to receive from me. I do not speak at present, it is to be remembered, of the additional force of law as applied to particular moral duties, a force which it may be expedient variously to extend or limit, but of the moral duties alone; and in these, alike in every case, the moral duty implies a moral right, and the moral right a moral duty. The laws, indeed, have made a distinction of our duties, enforcing the performance of some of them, and not enforcing the performance of others; but this partial interference of law, useful as it is in the highest degree to the happiness of the world, does not alter the nature of the duties themselves, which, as resulting from the moral nature of man, preceded every legal institution *.”

“Though he is not answerable to men if he refuses

* *Brown's Lectures*, vol. iv. p. 394.

to confer upon them those benefits which he has a discretionary right to bestow or withhold, he is accountable for that refusal to his God. For, every opportunity of doing good to one of his fellow-creatures without being obliged to omit some other duty of equal or superior importance, is an opportunity afforded him of serving his Maker, and thus promoting his own final happiness; and he is bound never to neglect that primary end of his being*.”

CHAPTER II.

THE RIGHTS OF MEN DEDUCED FROM REASON AND REVELATION.

THE rights of men are derived from the will of God; and their nature and number are pointed out by those relations which exist between man and God, between man and his fellow-creatures, and between man and that moral happiness and eternity for which he is designed. It is God who has constituted him what he is, a being endowed with reason and conscience, capable of being instrumental in his own happiness or misery, of being the object of moral approbation or disapprobation, and of knowing, loving, and serving God. By him is he placed in his present circumstances, in the bosom of the family of mankind, the greater part of which he has never seen, with a great part of which he has only a casual connexion, and with some members of which he has that union and

* *Gisborne's Principles of Mor. Phil.* p. 106.

intercourse which involves the most important obligations.

What are the original rights of mankind, and how are they to be ascertained? The knowledge of these is necessary to furnish a rule by which men are to regulate their conduct in regard to others, and to direct themselves in the use and disposal of that which is their own.

That every man has originally a right, by the will of God, to life—to freedom from personal injury and restraint—to as much of the unappropriated productions of the earth as are necessary to his subsistence—to accept from others such rights as they are authorized to transfer to him,—is a position so clear as to require neither proof nor illustration in its support. Nor can it reasonably be doubted, that every man is authorized to defend his own rights, and the rights of those who are under his protection, by the use of requisite force against an aggressor—to obtain restitution or indemnification in the case of an injury sustained,—and to waive, abridge, or alienate any of his alienable rights at his discretion. I have said *alienable* rights, because it is clear that there are certain rights which are unalienable. Thus, a man may give away his property, but he cannot part with his right over his own knowledge, thoughts, and responsibility: he cannot give up his right to judge for himself in matters of conscience, nor divest himself of his accountableness as a moral agent. He is, of course, accountable in proportion to his talents and opportunities; but from the constitution of his nature, he is in every situation accountable.

Are there any cases in which man is authorized to

deprive another of the gifts which God has given to him, or to restrain him in the enjoyment of them? According to Mr. Gisborne, and in his opinion I entirely concur, he is authorized to do so, when he proceeds in such deprivation and restraint so far, and so far only, as is necessary for the defence of the gifts of God to himself, or in defence of the gifts of God to those whom he is bound by natural ties to protect, or those by whom his aid is solicited, against attacks unauthorized by God: or, when he proceeds to such deprivation or restraint in consequence of the consent of the individual suffering it.

“ He may conclude, that for important purposes he is invested with a right to employ the powers of which he is possessed in defending himself against every kind of injury; whether it be likely to arise from famine or from nakedness, from the violence of a savage animal, or from the unwarranted attacks of a savage of his own species. And since he can in no case defend the divine gifts committed to his charge, without depriving the aggressor of some of his natural powers, or restraining him in the use of them; the arguments which justify him in defending himself against an unauthorized attack, evidently justify such deprivation or restraint, as far as may be necessary for his defence. He, therefore, who by invading the rights of another, has met with resistance, and has thereby lost any of the gifts conferred upon him, his property, his health, his limbs, or his life, must impute the loss wholly to himself. He runs upon a weapon pointed against him by the hand of God *.”

* Gisborne's Principles of Mor. Phil. p. 88.

The end for which men are invested with rights is, that they may be enabled to fulfil the design of their being, by promoting their own happiness in conformity to the will of God. This end, therefore, ought to be the great object of their pursuits, to which every habit and employment should be made subservient. By neglecting this, though they should abstain from infringing on the rights of others, they are chargeable with sinning against God. “Every man sins against God,” to use the words of the author already quoted, “who does not act in such a manner with respect to the use, defence, and disposal of his rights, as he is of opinion will, on the whole, fulfil most effectually the purposes of his being.”

It is scarcely necessary to remark, that these principles are sanctioned by Scripture, which teaches us that in God we live, and move, and have our being,—that from the Father of lights cometh down every good and perfect gift,—that we are bound to use his gifts for the purposes for which they are given, namely, the advancement of our own final welfare, and that of others,—and that every man must render an account of the talents with which he is intrusted at the tribunal of God.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR.

As love is the source and the animating principle of the duties which we owe to God, so is it the source and the animating principle of the duties which we owe to our fellow-creatures. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Owe no man any thing but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

By “thy neighbour” we are to understand every intelligent creature who is capable of being happy, or of receiving benefit from us. The term, of course, includes all mankind, enemies as well as friends; as is shewn by our Lord in the parable of the good Samaritan. To the question, Who is my neighbour? our Lord replied in a way to make the feelings of the inquirer give a decision opposed to his prejudices. The parable employed for this purpose is peculiarly

instructive and beautiful ; and is so obvious in its meaning, and so forcible in its conclusion, as to render all comment superfluous. The story has all the minuteness, all the local allusion, of a narration founded on facts.

In the parable, a certain man, who was a Jew, is represented as travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho, and falling into the hands of robbers, who, after stripping and wounding him, left him half dead. While in this helpless condition, there passed by him one who could have no prejudices against him on account of his country, and whose priestly office should have led him to have compassion on the distressed, and to relieve them. But when he saw him he passed by on the other side. There next followed a Levite, a man of professed sanctity, and who ought to have had pity on a fellow-creature ; but he, though he came and looked on him, passed by on the other side. Both were the ministers of religion, who were under obligation, from their office, to perform works of charity and mercy, and who could not palliate their inhumanity by alleging that the sufferer was a Samaritan or a Heathen.

At length a Samaritan came that way, between whom and the Jews there existed an hereditary hostility, but who, when he saw him, had compassion on him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. Here was the exercise of the love which is the fulfilling of the law. In place of calculating on the hinderance, the trouble, the expense, which would be occasioned by waiting to

help this fellow-creature in distress, the Samaritan was moved with compassion, and acted agreeably to its dictates.

The parable is so framed as to produce the conviction intended, and to force the inquirer to acknowledge, contrary to his prevailing prejudices, that all his fellow-creatures were his neighbours. This neighbourhood is founded on the common relation which subsists between all mankind as branches of one stock, as partakers of the same nature, as having the same capacity for immortal happiness, and as being mutually dependent on each other.

Thus, it appears, that all mankind are our neighbours, and that we are bound, to the extent of our power and opportunity, to do good unto all men. Intelligent beings, of whatever nature, who are capable of happiness, are the objects of our benevolent wishes, and did our efforts reach them, of whatever exertions we could make in advancing their welfare.

That we are bound to extend our benevolence and forgiveness to our enemies, is not less clear, as the duty is expressly enjoined by our Lord and his Apostles. “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, (that is, according to the sense in which the Pharisees understood this term, our friends,) and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you: that ye may be the children of your Father, who is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good; and sendeth rain on the just and on the

unjust*. For if ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? For sinners also love those that love them. But I say unto you, love ye your enemies; and do good, and lend; hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great; and ye shall be called the children of the Highest†. If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good‡.”

These, and other similar passages of Scripture, are decisive as to the duty of extending our benevolence and forgiveness to our enemies. If any one scriptural attestation to the importance of this duty could be supposed stronger than another, I would allude to the petition in that form of prayer which Christ taught his disciples: “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE EXTENT TO WHICH WE ARE REQUIRED TO LOVE OUR FELLOW-CREATURES.

THE rule which is to regulate the nature and extent of our benevolence, is contained in these words: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

The meaning of this language is, that our love to others is to be the same in kind, and similar in degree with that which we bear to ourselves.

* Matt. v. 43, &c.

† Luke vi. 32.

‡ Rom. xii. 20, 21.

It is to be the same in kind : not the same in nature as that inordinate, selfish, and sinful affection, with which mankind so generally regard themselves and their interests ; but the same as that with which they ought to love themselves. In this way, by appealing to our own hearts, we can ascertain the nature of the feelings which we should indulge to others, and the light in which we should view their happiness. Our feelings and conduct towards them are to be regulated by the great law of love. “ Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them, for this is the law and the prophets *.”

We very sincerely desire our own well-being, and feel, often inordinately, anxious for our own health, credit, safety, and success. We are affected with sorrow at our losses and disappointments, and rejoice when we are prosperous. We should bear a like affection to our neighbours, who are capable of the same enjoyment with ourselves, who occupy, as partakers of the same nature, the same rank in the scale of being, and who are the children of the same good and almighty Parent.

Loving our neighbour as ourselves also implies, that we are to love him generally to the same extent or degree. I say *generally*, that we are to love him to the same extent or degree ; for, by the constitution of our nature, which is to us the expression of the will of God, we are led to regard the duty as peculiar, of paying regard to ourselves, and to those who are ours. Besides, we certainly owe very different degrees of affection to our fellow-creatures, according to their re-

* Matt. vii. 12.

spective worth, and usefulness, and the relation, near or remote, in which they stand to us. We are to do good unto all men, as we have opportunity, but especially, that is, particularly, to those who are of the household of faith.

I would therefore understand the word *As*, in the commandment, as denoting similitude, rather than perfect equality. We are to love all with a benevolent affection, the same in kind with that which we bear to ourselves; and in general and in indefinite language, the same in degree. We may, with considerable accuracy, define the extent to which we are bound to love our neighbour. We should be as desirous of benefiting, and as unwilling to injure, any human being, as we are sincerely solicitous to do good to ourselves, and wishful to escape evil: we should be as ready to love what is truly lovely, to commend what is commendable, to compassionate, to excuse, and to preserve, in their character, interests, and connexions, every fellow-creature, as we are to exercise, and to do these things in regard to ourselves.

This is what the divine law demands, and what in reason and equity is due. We are the same with other human beings, in their capacity of enjoyment, in their relation to God, in their power of being instrumental in their own and in others' happiness, in their destination to eternity, and in all that is truly stable and substantial. We differ from them only in things that are fleeting and circumstantial; things in which the same individual, at different periods of his life, may differ from himself, without any diminution of affection for himself and for his interests. Is not

our love, therefore, as much due to our neighbour as it is to ourselves, however much his external circumstances may be different from ours? In the judgment of an impartial spectator, he may appear, in regard to all that is imperishable in man, the endowments of virtue and knowledge, not less entitled to love than we. If our love to ourselves is just and equitable only as it is proportioned to our worth, on what ground can we withhold it from others who are possessed of an equal, if not of a superior degree of excellency?

Laying aside every claim to regard on the ground of moral worth, we are bound to entertain and to shew kindness and good-will to all human beings,—to take pleasure in their happiness, just as we do in our own, and to do all in our power to promote it. We must be sensible that thus much is due to them as fellow-creatures, since we should expect, however wretched might be our condition, this degree of benevolence from others.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE NATURE AND PROPERTIES OF THE LOVE WE OWE OUR NEIGHBOUR,

THE love which is due from us to God comprehends, as has been shewn, delight or complacency in God, good-will towards him, and gratitude for his mercies. Wherever a fellow-creature is possessed of virtue,

and is, at the same time, our benefactor, our love to him, in order to come up to the requirement of the law, must be that of complacency and gratitude, as well as of benevolence. These feelings are closely allied to each other.

I. The love which we owe to our fellow-creatures is pre-eminently characterized by delight in their happiness. Its essence is a benevolent, heartfelt desire to promote their real welfare. The mind in which it dwells glows with good-will to the whole creation; and in regard to all mankind, sincerely wishes that their health, virtue, quiet, and prosperity, may be increased, and continued.

Love will lead us to extend kindness and forgiveness to our enemies; compassion to those who are even void of all moral excellency; and to do good to every creature to the extent of our power of benefiting them. Its object is happiness, happiness suited to the nature and faculties of sentient and intelligent beings; and, therefore, it must necessarily desire the weal of every human creature, as well as use suitable means for securing and promoting it.

II. Love to our neighbour implies that we duly value those who are included under this term. "He that is void of wisdom," saith the wise man, "despiseth his neighbour*." The folly of this conduct consists in treating that as despicable which is not really so; and which, however faulty, is, by the divine law, the object of our good-will and compassion. Are not all mankind alike, not only the creatures of God, but formed in his image? Are they not all endued

* Prov. ii. 12.

with an immortal spirit, and physically capable of everlasting happiness? Are they not all the objects of His care and bounty, whose tender mercies are over all his works? “Why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ†.”

If we value man according to what he is, even though fallen, and to what he is capable of becoming;—and still more, if we value him in any proportionable measure to the love which God has shewn him, we shall never think that any fellow-creature is too low, or too guilty, to be the object of our benevolence. We shall honour that nature of which we ourselves are partakers, by feeling and acting aright as to its happiness, by relieving its distresses, and adorning it with virtue, if it be in our power to do so.

III. Love to our fellow-creatures implies suitable activity in promoting their happiness. It will lead us to shew it, not by words only, but by actions. It will pervade and regulate the whole conduct, and operate as a constant and powerful principle of beneficence. It will produce in our character a resemblance to Him who went about doing good; and to our Father in heaven, whose overflowing goodness maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

This is a characteristic of love known and felt by all. This affection directly seeks the happiness of its object; and prompts, of course, to the use of those means by which this may be secured. It is on this ground we may affirm that its possessor will inva-

* Rom. xiv. 10.

riably be a benefactor, that he will do good in all the ways in which he has opportunity. His diffusive and substantial beneficence is well described in these words:—"I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him; the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame; I was a father to the poor, and the cause which I knew not I searched out *."

"Love," says the Apostle Paul, "worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." To refrain from voluntarily injuring our fellow-creatures is only a negative fruit of this affection; and, yet, of what importance is even this to the happiness of mankind. Love will prevent us from saying or doing any thing to the injury of our neighbour's reputation, person, property, peace, and privileges; and in proportion as it operates, will the evils by which these are assailed cease and disappear from the world. "This is the will of God, that no man go beyond, and defraud his brother in any matter; because that the Lord is the avenger of all such †."

But love is not satisfied by abstaining from doing injury; it seeks the happiness of its objects, and therefore prompts to the performance of every office of kindness. How touchingly is its influence, in this respect, illustrated by the condescension and generous interposition of Him who made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the

* Job xxix. 12—16.

† 1 Thess. iv. 6.

cross ! The glorified inhabitants of heaven, animated by love, are the willing ministers of those who shall be heirs of salvation. To the same operative and influential principle, we trace the self-denial, and sufferings, and sacrifices of those great and holy men, who, in the service of mankind, counted not their own lives dear unto themselves. It was love that animated their zeal, their prayers, their unwearied labours, in promoting the real and eternal welfare of those who rewarded them with stripes, and bonds, and imprisonments.

In proportion as we are under its control, will the law of kindness prompt and regulate every part of our conduct. We shall be ready with our countenance, our advice, our prayers, our assistance, and our sympathy ; happy in being the instruments of doing good to those whom the Great Lord of all has rendered capable of receiving it. So essential is this affection to the right discharge of the duties we owe our fellow-creatures, that no duty can be performed well without it.—“ Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long, and is kind ; love envieth not ; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil ; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth ; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail ; whether there be tongues,

they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away*.”

If this principle were implanted universally in the heart of man, that selfishness which now prompts him to pursue what he reckons an advantage, at the expense of the lives, the property, the peace of his fellow-creatures, would cease to operate; and influenced only by love, he would seek their happiness by such means, and in such a way, as love will suggest. He would seek to please them only for their good; and by the exercise of genuine kindness, in his manners, his words, his actions, and his intercourse with others, would be the source of felicity to all around him.

IV. A marked characteristic of the love we owe to our neighbour is, its disinterested nature. “Love seeketh not her own.—If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not even the publicans so? But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect†.”

These, and many other passages of Scripture shew, that the love required by the divine law is totally free

* 1 Cor. xiii. 3—8.

† Matt. v. 44—48.

from selfishness; that it leads those in whom it dwells to do good to all, without any reference to the personal recompense that may be gained in return; and to labour in overcoming the hostility of enemies by contributing *disinterestedly* to their happiness. It is the pure love of happiness, the fixed desire that every creature capable of virtuous enjoyment may possess it. How little human beings, even the best, are under the control of this heavenly principle, it is unnecessary to say.

V. The love of our neighbour is essentially allied to the love of God, and is subordinate to it. Our Lord, after repeating the first great commandment of the law, adds, “the second is like; namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” But in what way is the second like the first, if it be not that the affection required in both is the same in nature? We are, indeed, to love the Lord our God so far beyond any other object, that even our natural affections must be indulged in subordination to this. “He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me,” said the Saviour; “and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.” But this implies nothing at variance with the position, that the love of God and of our neighbour is the same virtuous affection, exercised in reference to different objects.

In loving God, the mind is affected with delight in his moral excellency, joy in his happiness, and gratitude for his mercies: in loving our fellow-creatures, there is, at least, pleasure felt in their happiness, and the desire of promoting it. This affection is so essentially the same, that it is impossible for the same indi-

vidual to exercise it towards God, and not exercise it towards his fellow-creatures; or truly and disinterestedly to love his fellow-creatures, and not love God. No mind that is not really virtuous can at all exercise it; and if it be truly exercised towards God, the greatest and the most glorious Being, it will unquestionably be exercised towards created intelligent beings.

VI. Hence the connexion, close and indissoluble, between piety and virtue, between religion and morality. The one never does, and never can exist, in the absence of the other. Hence also the true spring, the animating principle, of all social virtue, and of all those great and important duties which man owes to man. Without this, indeed, there may be much of that external morality, which the order of human society requires, produced by views of expediency, honour, and custom; but it will be void of that which gives to the action its virtuous character, the inward spirit and life, the love which is the fulfilling of the law. It will be variable and unstable; fall very far short of the true standard of moral excellency; and will be mischievous in its operation and consequences.

That the morality produced by the principles which I have mentioned, expediency, honour, and custom, and other principles of a similar description, must be variable and unstable, will not be questioned by any sound moralist. If, according to the principles of expediency, every man is allowed to judge for himself whether it be more useful to obey or to disobey; and if this judgment is formed under the immediate influence of hopes and fears, in the bustle of human

life, and in the hour of temptation, can it be affirmed, that his moral conduct will not bend and accommodate itself to the shifting circumstances in which he is placed? Or should his principle of action be honour or custom, which will lead him, of course, constantly to look to the changing opinions of his fellow-creatures, to human estimation as his great rule and ultimate end, his morality will fluctuate with the fluctuation of fashion and feeling around him.

But though it were not liable to this and other exceptions, it falls very far short of the true standard of moral feeling and conduct. That action alone is morally good which proceeds from a morally good principle. Expediency is not of this description, since its direct tendency is to set loose from the authority of conscience, to furnish a law different and opposite from the immutable law of God, and to suggest a pretext for the commission of crime both in public and private life. Neither does honour possess this character; for that teaches us to refer to the opinion and decision of man, and not to God; and to regard with indifference some of the grossest immoralities, such as pride, revenge, drunkenness, and impurity.

These principles are widely injurious in their operation and consequences. The readiness with which man embraces any doctrine, which allows him to make an occasional surrender of duty and conscience to present gratification, renders every false system of morals extensively pernicious. The direct tendency of every such system, is, to lower the standard of morals, to represent more or less the indulgence of those evil propensities which do not immediately inter-

ferre with the order and existence of human society as venial; to remove restraints from the passions; and generally to enfeeble the obligation of moral truth and duty. As the consequence, there is in the mind of the multitudes by whom such principles are adopted, either singly, or in combination, an indistinctness of moral perception, and erroneous views of the extent and authority of moral obligation. The mischievous effects which result from the operation of errors of so grave a character, are incalculable, both in respect to the feelings and conduct of the individuals subjected to it, and of the community of which they form so great a part.

The love of God and of man, on the other hand, is a pure, disinterested, and powerful principle of moral conduct, which maintains the desire and the effort of making all happy, constantly, consistently, and universally operative, producing, without regard to consequences, a willing obedience to God, and genuine benevolence to man. The morality of which it is the spring, being regulated by the word of God, by that unchanging law which is a transcript of the divine holiness, is of a different nature from the fluctuating, accommodating, and lax morality which is the effect of worldly principles. It forbids every sinful indulgence, proscribes every passion, cherishes every virtue, gives to conscience, enlightened by heavenly truth, its legitimate supremacy, and it presents the harmony and happiness of the universe as objects to which we are ever to devote our labours and energies. It teaches us to make all our conduct, and all our pursuits, whether they immediately affect our-

selves or others, acts of obedience unto God, whose authority is in all things our rule, and whose glory it is our privilege to promote. It thus leads us "to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world "

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE WAY IN WHICH BENEVOLENCE IS TO BE EXERCISED,
SO AS TO BE PRODUCTIVE OF THE GREATEST GOOD TO
MANKIND.

It has been maintained by certain writers, that as we are bound to love our neighbour with the same pure and disinterested affection which we bear to ourselves, we are bound to express our love to all in the same manner. It is, therefore, say they, wrong to appropriate exclusively to our own use blessings which the law of love makes common to all; or to make that particular provision for our families which should be given freely to the members of the family of mankind. As it is our duty to love others as ourselves, ought we not to share with them in common, whatever good we may procure by our talents and industry? Without this, what is our love but empty profession, and does it not consist merely in word and in tongue?

In reply to this sophistical objection, which, if followed out, would fill the world with anarchy and misery, by annihilating those means and institutions which Providence has ordained for cherishing virtue

and checking vice, for increasing human happiness and alleviating human evil, I remark,—

I. That the law which enjoins us to love our neighbour as ourselves, is a law designed to regulate the moral feelings and conduct of reflecting and intelligent beings in regard to their fellow-creatures. In obeying this law, that is, in loving others as themselves, they are not only allowed, but required to act in the exercise of their best judgment, and in that way in which the great object of love, human happiness, may be most effectually promoted. Should the convictions of judgment and experience on this subject be confirmed by the decision of the only wise God, the Supreme Ruler and Legislator, there, of course, would be no room for hesitation as to the best, the only method of following out the law of love. That decision from the first creation of mankind was given; it has been explained and enforced by subsequent revelations; and its wisdom and beneficence are amply confirmed by the history of the human race. I observe, therefore,—

II. That according to the decision of divine authority, as well as of human experience, the happiness of mankind is best secured by their living in families. It is unnecessary to mention all the purposes intended to be accomplished by this institution; but it is obvious that one great object designed to be attained by it is, the religious education and improvement of children. The great Lord and Ruler of all trains up, under this system of discipline, the intelligent and accountable beings whom he forms, and thus prepares them for the duties and trials of life, and for giving a cheerful

obedience to his laws, whether immediately enacted by himself, or enjoined by human authority. The heads of families are thus peculiarly constituted the servants of God; he rules through their instrumentality the little community over which they preside; he makes them kings and priests to their own household; and he intrusts them with a charge endeared to them by all the ties of nature, and of infinite importance both in relation to this world and the next.

It is in families also that the natural affections are cherished—those affections which soften human nature, which are the source of so much happiness, and which are such important auxiliaries to whatever is good in man. Had there been no such institution, and had human beings been so circumstanced that the tender ties of kindred could not be formed, the parental, filial, fraternal, and other affections which are called natural, could have had no existence. Dark and miserable must have been the condition of a fallen world, with inhabitants destitute of pure benevolence, and at the same time wanting in those instinctive feelings and affections which, in the absence of a higher principle, are essential to the existence of society.

In consequence of their living in families also, mankind are capable of prosecuting their worldly business with the greatest effect. That which is the business of all is seldom done by any. To enable us to apply our powers successfully, we find it necessary to limit our attention to some definite object. Families can easily and effectually conduct the government of their respective establishments, and embrace, without

embarrassment, that division of human affairs which falls to their management. But let this arrangement be annihilated, let there be no division of mankind into families, no separate economy, no suitable allotment of business, and the immediate consequence would be universal waste, profligacy, and ruin.

III. It is the ordination of Providence, that every individual should have an immediate and pressing inducement to labour.—Without this, it is demonstrable that mankind would never have made any advance in improvement of any kind; that consequently, we must have wanted the acquirements, the industry, the arts, the institutions, which gladden and adorn human existence. Without an inducement, and such an immediate and pressing inducement, as comes home to the understanding and heart of all, to labour in all the ways in which man can benefit himself or others, it is certain that the earth would remain uncultivated, that the world would soon be thinly peopled, and that the few inhabitants on its surface would be idle, ignorant, and miserable.

But this immediate and pressing inducement to voluntary labour is only to be found in that peculiar interest, which, from the constitution of his nature, man feels in that which he calls his own. He is formed to love others; but he is also so formed, that he cannot but love himself, and value what he reckons conducive to his happiness. He is also so made, that those who are united to him by a family relation, who are the objects of his natural affections, he considers as his own, as himself, whose well-being he feels himself bound to promote. It is from thence he

derives the most powerful motives to laborious and painful exertion ; and that he is prompted to such a uniform exercise of his talents and energies, as makes him a voluntary benefactor to his fellow-creatures. Hence I notice,—

IV. That genuine disinterested benevolence regards those as its first objects, who, from proximity, relationship, or moral worth, have peculiar claims. “Do good,” says the Apostle, “unto all men, as ye have opportunity, but especially to those who are of the household of faith.” If it be the desire of that love which is the fulfilling of the law to do the greatest good possible, and this surely must be the dictate of genuine disinterested benevolence, then, every man must begin at home, with the members of his own family, with the poor, the ignorant, the wretched, in his vicinity, with the division of the church of Christ with which he is connected, with his kindred and country. By sighing over the thralldom and misery of distant nations, and by neglecting the wants of those within our reach, we are wasting our benevolence, if benevolence it can be called, on those whom we cannot benefit, and leaving unoccupied the important sphere of duty and of usefulness in which Providence invites us to move. We attempt to invert that order which the ordination of heaven has fixed for the exercise of our benevolence, and the discharge of its duties ; and, thus, it would seem that we would fain improve on the plans of infinite wisdom and goodness, as if we were wiser and more compassionate than He who formed us.

In exact proportion as we exercise true benevolence

to those within our reach, is it proved that we should shew it to those at a distance, provided it were in our power to do so. It is thus only, and not by useless lamentations over distant distresses, and idle declamation concerning the perfectibility of human nature, that we cherish that love which is the true spring of all social virtue. It is comparatively few of the human race that we can personally benefit; for the rest we can only shew our benevolence by our wishes and prayers, and by contributing, as we have opportunity, to the diffusion of that glorious Gospel which is the declaration of peace on earth, and goodwill towards men. It was thus that good men of old acted, while they expressed their earnest desires for the happiness of the whole family of mankind: "God be merciful unto us and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us; that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations."

"There is a scale of benevolent desire, which corresponds with the necessities to be relieved, and our power of relieving them; or, with the happiness to be afforded, and our power of affording happiness. How many opportunities have we of giving delight to those who live in our domestic circle, which would be lost before we could diffuse it, to those who are distant from us! Our love, therefore,—our desire of giving happiness,—our pleasure in having given it, are stronger within the limits of this sphere of daily and hourly intercourse, than beyond it. Of those who are beyond this sphere, the individuals most familiar to us are those whose happiness we must always know better how to promote, than the happiness of stran-

gers, with whose particular habits and inclinations we are little, if at all acquainted. Is it possible to perceive this general proportion of our desire of giving happiness, in its various degrees, to the means which we possess, in various circumstances, of affording it, without admiration of an arrangement so simple in the principles from which it flows, or at the same time so effectual,—an arrangement which exhibits proofs of goodness in our very wants, of wisdom in our very weaknesses, by the adaptation of these to each other, and by the ready resources which want and weakness find in these affections which everywhere surround them, like the presence and protection of God himself*.”

CHAPTER VII.

HUMANITY.

THIS is the necessary fruit of benevolence ; and will spring forth, wherever benevolence has its abode. It consists of a variety of minute and kindly offices, which necessarily vary with the varying circumstances of human life. It is, when genuine, the effect of the principle of beneficence, and not merely of natural affection.

This virtue, which softens and adorns all our social virtues, shews itself, not only by a regard to the wants, but by a deference to the feelings of others. The

* Brown's Lectures, vol. iii. p. 348.

individual in whose bosom the gentle virtues of humanity abide, glows with good-will to every living thing; he remembers that the path which leads to the tomb is already sufficiently darkened by the shadow of death, though he should not unnecessarily aggravate the gloom;—and that while he and his fellow-candidates for eternity are within a few paces of the boundary which will unite or separate them for ever, he ought to shew them all the kindness in his power while advancing thither.

In many, the wish to promote the happiness of mankind by a kind and courteous demeanour, discovers itself only at distant intervals, and on great occasions. They seem to feel only when affliction makes a loud appeal to them; or when they are surrounded with spectators to applaud their beneficent exertions;—forgetting that the happiness of man is made up, not by a few acts of generosity, but by the frequent, and, in many cases, undefinable offices of daily life;—and that the continued exercise of humanity, and the endearing tones of affection, are productive of far more substantial good, than the sacrifice of a splendid fortune without them.

Humanity is exercised towards the lower animals, as well as in regard to mankind. “A righteous man,” that is, a virtuous humane man, “will regard the life of his beast.” His love to universal happiness will shew itself in his kind and gentle treatment of the whole animated creation. In this respect, he will derive the rule of his conduct from the description which the pen of inspiration gives of the bounteous conduct of the Parent of all, in regard to all the crea-

tures to which he has given being. “The eyes of all wait on thee ; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.”

“It is no more than the obligation of our very birth to practise equity to our kind ; but humanity may be extended through the whole order of creatures, even to the meanest. History tells us of a wise and polite nation that rejected a person of the first quality, who stood for a judiciary office, only because he had been observed in his youth to take pleasure in teasing and murdering of birds. And of another that expelled a man out of the senate, for dashing a bird against the ground which had taken shelter in his bosom. I remember an Arabian Author, who has written a treatise to shew how far a man supposed to have subsisted in a desert island, without any instruction, or so much as the sight of any other man, may, by the pure light of nature, attain the knowledge of philosophy and virtue. One of the first things he makes him observe is, that universal benevolence of nature in the protection and preservation of its creatures. In imitation of which the first act of virtue he thinks his self-taught philosopher would of course fall into is, to relieve and assist all the animals about him in their wants and distresses *.”

* *Guardian*, vol. iii. No. 61.

CHAPTER VIII.

GRATITUDE.

THERE are certain dispositions and their contraries, such as humility and pride, gratitude and unthankfulness, which, in their immediate exercise, may be directed either towards God or towards man. The same depravity of mind from which ingratitude to a fellow-creature originates, produces ingratitude to God, our great and constant Benefactor. This is one reason why it has always been regarded with abhorrence.

Such is the benevolence of our Creator, that he has connected pleasure with the communication and with the reception of good. The very exercise of beneficence is happiness,—happiness both to the giver and the receiver. There are awakened in the heart of the recipient, the emotions of love to the benefactor, the wish for his happiness, and the desire of rendering him some service for its promotion. “He whose generous life is a continued diffusion of happiness, may thus delight himself with the thought, that, in diffusing it, he has been, at the same time, the diffuser of virtue,—at least, of wishes which were virtue for the time, and required nothing to convert them into beneficence, but the means of exercising them.”

The exercise of beneficence creates obligations on the part of the benefactor, as well as on that of the object of his bounty ; though, doubtless, the principal class of duties devolve on the recipient. The giver

must bestow his favours with disinterested benevolence,—with a kindness that flows from a generous heart ;—and without abusing that power which he acquires, by often reminding the person whom he has obliged of the very great value of the favours conferred. Should he bestow his gifts for the purpose of afterwards exercising a malevolent control, in exacting services which it is unreasonable to pay, and in cruelly torturing the unfortunate objects of his professed liberality, he can have no ground to complain of the want of gratitude, since gratitude, in the way in which he expected it, was never really due.

The duties of the obliged are very obvious. Nature teaches them to love those who do them good, especially when this good is manifestly done from pure and disinterested motives. It also points out to them the obligation of guarding their reputation, and of promoting their interests ; and, generally, of doing all in their power, without compromising moral principle, to extend their happiness. Christianity very fully, by the great facts on which it rests, by the leading motives which it presents, by incidental allusions, and by numerous examples, recognises these, as the duties which spring from gratitude. “ We love him, (God) because he first loved us. The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge,—that He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again *.” “ The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus ; for he oft refreshed me, and

* 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

was not ashamed of my chain : but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day *."

Hence, then, the great evil of ingratitude : an evil which consists in the violation of the natural feelings of the human heart, which, because they are truly natural, are an intimation to us of the will of God. This intimation is ratified by the unequivocal authority of revelation. To love those who love them, it considers to be so common to mankind, that this affection is exercised by those who have scarcely any other virtue †. To be void of it, mankind have considered in all ages as the extreme of human depravity. They have classed the ungrateful with the most atrocious criminals.

Mr. Paley places the evil of ingratitude on the wrong foundation,—the inexpediency of its practice in reference to society. "In this," says he, "the mischief of ingratitude consists. Nor is the mischief small ; for after all is done that can be done, towards providing for the public happiness, by prescribing rules of justice, and enforcing the observation of them by penalties or compulsion, much must be left to those offices of kindness, which men remain at liberty to exert or withhold. Now, not only the choice of the objects, but the quantity, and even the existence of this sort of kindness in the world, depends, in a great measure, upon the return which it receives."

Undoubtedly, there are many who exercise kindness, or the appearance of kindness, from interested

* 2 Tim. i. 16—18.

† Matt. v. 46.

motives, and from the return of gratitude which they expect to receive. Is it, however, for a writer on morals, to recommend this conduct to mankind? If, in giving of our property to the poor, we must bestow, if we bestow aright, not with a view to compensation in the gratitude which it may procure us, but from a sense of duty, we are surely bound to discharge all the obligations of benevolence on the same principle. We ought to exercise beneficence to all men as we have opportunity; and we ought to feel, and to shew ourselves grateful to our benefactors: but we should act thus in both cases, because it is our duty, enjoined by the will of God, and the performance of which is well-pleasing to him.

Ingratitude, doubtless, like the manifestation of depravity in every form, is productive of sin and misery. But no man who is beneficent on principle, that is, who is virtuously beneficent, will be checked in his virtuous course, by discovering the baseness and malignity of those whom he has benefited. "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you,—that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven."

CHAPTER IX.

FRIENDSHIP.

It has been supposed that the existence of friendship is incompatible with the exercise of universal bene-

violence; and that on this ground the Scriptures are silent respecting it *.

* "We perceive the impropriety of making it (friendship) the subject of legislation. It is the duty of every man to cultivate the dispositions which lead to friendship, the love of his species, admiration of virtue, regard to the feelings of others, gratitude, humility, along with the most inflexible adherence to probity and truth. Wherever these exist, friendship will be the natural result; but it will result as a felicity rather than a duty; and is to be placed among the rewards of virtue, rather than its obligations. Happiness is not to be prescribed, but to be enjoyed. Were friendship inculcated as a matter of indispensable obligation, endless embarrassment would arise in determining at what period the relation shall commence; whether with one or with more; and at what stage, in the progress of mutual attraction, at what point, the feelings of reciprocal regard shall be deemed to reach the maturity, which entitles them to the sacred name of friendship. The laws of piety and virtue are coeval with our existence, considered as reasonable and accountable creatures. Their authority is founded on immutable relations, the duties resulting from which are capable of being clearly conceived and exactly defined; but he who should undertake to prescribe to the subtle and mysterious impulses which invite susceptible minds to friendship, would find himself engaged in an attempt as hopeless, as to regulate the motions of the air which 'bloweth where it listeth.'

"But though the cultivation of friendship, for the reasons already assigned, is not made the subject of precept, but is left to grow up of itself under the general culture of reason and religion, it is one of the fairest productions of the human soil, the cordial of life, the lenitive of our sorrows, and the multiplier of our joys; the source equally of animation and of repose. He who is destitute of this blessing, amidst the greatest crowd and pressure of society, is doomed to solitude; and however surrounded with flatterers and admirers, however armed with power, and rich in the endowments of nature and of fortune, has no resting place. The most elevated station in life affords no exemption from those agitations and disquietudes which can only be laid to rest on the bosom of a friend. He who has made the acquisition of a judicious and sympathizing friend, may be said to have doubled his mental resources: by associating an equal, perhaps a superior mind, with his own, he has provided the means of strengthening his reason, of perfecting his counsels, of discerning and correcting his errors. He can have recourse at all times to the judgment and assistance of one, who, with the same power of discernment with himself, comes to the decision of a question with a mind neither harassed with the perplexities, nor heated with the passions, which so frequently obscure the perception of our true interests. Next to the immediate guidance of God by his Spirit, the counsel and encouragement of virtuous and enlightened friends afford the most powerful aid, in the encounter of temptation and in the career of duty." (A Sermon occasioned by the death of the Rev. John Ryland, D.D., by Robert Hall, M.A.)

But this supposition is not well-founded. It is possible to love our neighbour as ourselves, and at the same time entertain that love and esteem towards individuals which constitute friendship. From the different dispositions and temperaments of mankind, it would appear to be the design of Providence, that friendship should be formed, in consequence of persons of kindred minds associating together.

The Scriptures abound with the most beautiful examples of the tenderest and closest friendship. How could the strength and durability of friendship be more touchingly exemplified than in the case of David and Jonathan? Their several interviews present to us the exercise of deep and disinterested affection. "The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle."

With regard to the alleged silence of the Gospel as to friendship, it may be remarked, that its Divine Author commanded his disciples to love one another with a pure and disinterested affection; and that the direct tendency of his religion is to produce and maintain among all truly virtuous persons a friendship of the most generous and exalted nature, to flourish with new and undecaying vigour in a happier world. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one

another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another *." Is not friendship the natural and necessary result of the exercise of the fraternal affection here enjoined? The effect of obedience to this commandment must be our enjoying the intimate acquaintance, the counsel and advice, the love and confidence of those whom we choose as our personal friends. If our Lord himself favoured some with his friendship, as in the case of the disciple whom he loved, and the pious family at Bethany, it cannot be wrong in us to cultivate the same feelings, and to seek the same enjoyments.

“ Our Divine Lawgiver shewed his wisdom, equally in what he enjoined, and what he left unnoticed. He knew exactly,—what no Pagan philosopher ever knew,—where to be silent, and where to speak. It was not his intention, it was indeed far below his dignity, to say fine things upon popular subjects; pleasing perhaps to a few, but utterly useless to the bulk of mankind. His object was of a much more important and extensive nature; to inculcate the plain, humble, practical duties of piety and morality; the duties that were of universal concern and indispensable obligation, such as were essentially necessary to our well-being in this life, and our everlasting happiness in the next. Now, the warmest admirers of friendship cannot pretend to raise it into a duty of this high rank. It is a delightful, it is an amiable, it is often a laudable attachment; but it is not a necessary requisite, either to the present welfare or future salva-

* John xiii. 34, 35.

tion of mankind in general, and, consequently, is not of sufficient importance to deserve a distinct place in the christian system *."

A faithful friend is beyond all value ; as the delight of true friendship is one of the purest and most exalted pleasures. We are led by the constitution of our nature, no less than by the circumstances in which we are placed, to form this relation, and to desire this enjoyment; and it is well when we choose those as our friends who have qualities of temper and of moral worth which constitute them fit objects of our love.

I. It is our duty to exercise judgment and discrimination in the selection of friends. This may not be necessary in regard to those common acquaintances which we make in the intercourse of human life, and who because our intercourse consists in the interchange of civilities merely, possess scarcely any influence on our character and happiness. But if friendship be, what it has been very happily termed, " an alliance of heart with heart,—if, in giving our sorrow or projects to be shared by another, we are to partake, in our turn, his sorrows or designs, whatever they may be,—to consider the virtue of him whom we admit to this diffusion with us of one common being, and to yield our affection, only as we discover the virtue which alone is worthy of it, is almost the same thing as to consult our own virtue."

If we are desirous that our friendship should be lasting, that the happiness which it yields should abide with us under the calamities as well as under the sunshine of human life, it becomes us to take

* Bishop Porteus's Sermons, vol. i. p. 438.

good heed to the dispositions and character of those whom we make our friends. Can they be faithful friends to us who are unfriendly to their own virtue and happiness; whose habitual imprudence, or whose habitual vice, surrounds them with misery? Ought we not also to hesitate in receiving to the entire love and confidence of friendship persons of a peevish, discontented, and suspicious turn of mind?

II. When we have selected our friends, we should cherish towards them all tenderness and fidelity of affection. The tenderness with which we should treat their feelings and character, and even their very failings, will appear by recollecting the manner in which we ourselves are affected by the conduct of our friends in regard to us. We feel very sensibly any unkindness in words or actions from them; when we would have disregarded much worse conduct in persons indifferent to us. "It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him. But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company."

The mutual confidence which is requisite to friendship renders fidelity indispensable. He who is incapable of retaining in his own bosom the communications which friendship confides to him, either from imbecility, or from the vanity of shewing that he knows what is unknown by others, may be very learned, and very amiable, but he is wanting in one of the most essential qualifications of a desirable

friend. When he whom we call our friend is worthy of that name, when we are assured that he deserves our full confidence, we have a pleasure in telling him our joys and sorrows, our hopes and fears, and in unbosoming our whole soul. It is with great truth, therefore, that the Roman moralist says,—“If you think any one your friend in whom you do not put the same confidence as in yourself, you know not the real power of friendship. Consider long, whether the individual whom you view with regard is worthy of being admitted to your bosom; but when you have judged and found him truly worthy, admit him to your very heart. You should so live, indeed, as to trust nothing to your conscience, which you would not trust to your enemy; but at least, to your friend, let all be open. He will be the more faithful, as your confidence in his fidelity is more complete.”

III. Our interest in the happiness of our friends should be sufficiently deep to produce in us a readiness and a pleasure to serve them, when it is in our power to do so. The genuineness of our friendship must be shewn, not by words and professions merely, but by deeds of substantial kindness. If it be our duty, should the providence of God call us to it, to lay down our lives for the brethren; it cannot be doubted that we are bound to comfort them in affliction, and, should their circumstances require it, and ours afford it, to give them pecuniary assistance. If we expect when we are in distress to hear the soothing voice of friendship,—that voice which it gives us pleasure to hear, even when our friend cannot relieve us,—affection will teach us to express our sympathy with him, and

willingly to give our influence or property, as he may require it, to promote his well-being.

IV. We owe our friends also a lively interest in their moral and religious improvement. This is indeed the chief of the duties, and perhaps the most difficult to discharge, of any involved in a virtuous friendship. But to Christians, who consider their being as commencing when this fleeting life has passed away, and who hope to enjoy that nobler being where all imperfection shall be unknown, the value of friendship is enhanced, as it promises to survive this perishable existence. Its bonds become firmer just as we can look with humble confidence beyond this passing scene, to the regions into which distrust and suspicion never enter, where love and friendship hold an eternal sway.

With the wish that our friendship may thus be immortal, it must be our duty, not merely to correct the faults of our friend, but to aim by such means as affection will suggest, at cherishing his virtues, and increasing the sum of those moral excellences which are the object of our love. Do we hesitate in the discharge of this duty from the fear of offending? "He whom we truly offend by such gentle admonitions as friendship dictates, is not worthy of the friendship which we have wasted on him; and if we thus lose his friendship, we are delivered from one who could not be sincere in his past professions of regard, and whose mockery, therefore, we might afterwards have had reason to lament. If he be worthy of us, he will not love us less, but love us more; he will feel that we have done that which it was our duty to do; and

we shall have the double gratification, of witnessing the amendment which we desired, and of knowing that we have contributed to an effect, which was almost like the removal of a vice from ourselves, or a virtue added to our own moral character*."

V. The dissolution of friendship involves the discharge of certain duties. Should it cease in any particular case before death, we are bound, even when we have discovered the worthlessness of the object to which we had given our esteem and affection, to remain faithful to whatever trust was reposed in us while our friendship lasted. Nor is there any dispensation from this obligation, unless it be when our character is attacked by the person whose secret we keep, and when in our own defence and vindication we are forced to make a disclosure.

Should our friendship be dissolved by death, there are still duties which devolve upon us who survive. Our friend is removed from us; but his removal makes it our duty to cherish his memory, and to hope for a renewal of our friendship, where there is no more sorrow, nor pain, nor separation, nor death. "The name of our friends," as an eloquent French writer remarks, "their family, have still claims on our affection, which it would be guilt not to feel. They should live still in our heart, by the emotions which subsist there,—on our memory, by our frequent remembrance of them,—in our voice, by our eulogiums,—in our conduct, by our imitation of their virtues."

Mutual confidence is never for a moment to be interrupted between friends, whether in jest or in earnest; for nothing can heal the wounds which are made

by deceit. A friend must never be forsaken in adversity ; nor for any infirmity in human nature, excepting only invincible depravity.

CHAPTER X.

ON PATRIOTISM.

THE love of his country, and of its institutions, is as natural to man, as is the love of those who are endeared to him by his earliest, his most pleasing, and most permanent, associations. He impresses something of himself, of his joys and sorrows, his hopes and fears, on the objects, whether animate or inanimate, which surround his youth, or with which he holds intercourse in maturer years. Nor is it possible for him, at a more advanced period of life, to behold the house, the glen, the rocks, the woods, that "met his earliest view," without experiencing the freshness of new existence, from the vivid reflection of the images of his former self*.

* It has been alleged by unbelievers, as a defect in the morality of the gospel, that it neglects to inculcate patriotism and friendship. In regard to the first of these, it seems a sufficient reply, that though an attachment to our country as such, is not expressly enjoined in the New Testament, the duties which result from the relation in which Christians stand to their rulers, are prescribed with great perspicuity, and enforced by very solemn sanctions ; and if the reciprocal duties of princes and magistrates are not enjoined with equal explicitness (as could not be expected in writings where they are not addressed) the design of their appointment is defined in such a manner, as leaves them at no loss to perceive what it is they owe to the community. But where these duties are faithfully discharged by each party, the benefits derived from the social compact are so justly appreciated, and so deeply felt, that the love of country is less liable to defect than to excess. In all well-ordered polities, if we may judge from the experience of past ages, the attachment of men to their country is in danger of becoming an absorbing principle, inducing not merely a forget-

The house of our earlier years, the field over which we walked with a friend, the mountain's brow which we have climbed with those we love, the tree whose branches shaded us from the sun, the spot on which we heard a parent pronounce his parting blessing,—are objects which can never afterwards be witnessed without emotion. It is to the influence which, in consequence of the principle of association, such objects and scenes have on the human mind, that I chiefly ascribe the desire which all who have been called away to other climes, feel sometime to revisit their native land.

In all my wand'rings round this world of care,
In all my griefs,—and God has given my share,—
I still had hopes my latest hours to crown,
Amidst these humble bowers to lay me down;—
And as a hare whom hounds and horns pursue,
Pants to the place from whence at first he flew,—
I still had hopes, my long vexations past,
Here to return,—and die at home at last.

We are also sensibly affected by scenes that have been distinguished by the residence of persons whose

fulness of private interest, but of the immutable claims of humanity and justice. In the most virtuous times of the Roman republic, their country was the idol, at whose shrine her greatest patriots were at all times prepared to offer whole hecatombs of human victims: the interest of other nations were no further regarded, than as they could be rendered subservient to the gratification of her ambition; and mankind at large were considered as possessing no rights, but such as might with the utmost propriety be merged in that devouring vortex. With all their talents and their grandeur, they were unprincipled oppressors, leagued in a determined conspiracy against the liberty and independence of mankind. In the eyes of an enlightened philanthropist, patriotism, pampered to such an excess, loses the name of virtue; it is the bond and cement of a guilty confederation. It was worthy of the wisdom of our great legislator to decline the express inculcation of a principle so liable to degenerate into excess, and to content himself with prescribing the virtues which are sure to develop it, as far as is consistent with the dictates of universal benevolence. (A Sermon occasioned by the death of the Rev. John Byland, D.D., by Robert Hall, M.A.)

memory we love and admire. “*Movemur enim, nescio quo pacto, locis ipsis, in quibus eorum, quos diligimus, aut admiramur adsunt vestigia.*” “The scenes themselves may be little beautiful; but the delight with which we recollect the traces of their lives, blends itself insensibly with the emotions which the scenery excites; and the admiration which these recollections afford, seems to give a kind of sanctity to the place where they dwelt, and converts every thing into beauty which appears to have been connected with them.”

From such principles of human nature arises the love of our native land, its inhabitants and institutions; and when this love is pure and fervent, and exercised in consistency with a due respect to the rights of all mankind, it is the virtue of patriotism. If, as has been shewn, it be the will of God, that our benevolence should first and chiefly be expressed to those in our vicinity, to those who are connected with us in a family relation, and by the ties of kindred, neighbourhood, and union of interest, as living under the same government, the duty of patriotism is clearly established. We can cherish this regard to our country compatibly with the claims of all men to our sympathy and benevolence; and we are giving the best proofs of our sincerity in praying for the temporal and eternal happiness of the whole human race, by zealously discharging the duties connected with the sphere in which we move.

It cannot be alleged that christianity does not give direct countenance both by example and by precept to the virtue of patriotism. Did not its Divine Founder exemplify this virtue, by coming first to his own; in the meekness and patience with which, notwith-

standing their contempt and opposition, he persevered in going about to do them good ; in the grief with which he wept over the impending destruction of Jerusalem ; and in the commission which he gave his apostles to make the first offer of salvation to the inhabitants of that devoted city.

The influence and genius of christianity are directly productive of public spirit and social virtue. If it lead all who sincerely embrace it to the practice of a pure and elevated morality in private, there can be no doubt of its tendency to cherish the kindlier feelings of the heart, and of its inclining them to do good unto all men, as they have opportunity. The astonishing facts on which it is founded, cannot be credited without producing in the mind a lively sympathy with the condition of others ; and they bring to operate upon us so many and such powerful motives, not merely to do the things that are just, but to do the things that are generous, as can only be resisted by those who harden themselves against their authority and influence. How numerous are the arguments employed by the writers of the New Testament to induce us to be kind and tender-hearted towards all men, to contribute to the relief of their necessities, to sympathize with them in their afflictions, and to take a friendly interest in their prosperity ! How fully did they illustrate their exhortations in the disinterestedness of their own conduct, in their submission to labour and peril, and in that relinquishment of ease and life, which has constituted them the benefactors of distant ages and generations !

It were, indeed, singular, if a religion which is

founded on mercy, which breathes good-will to man, and which was at first promulgated by persons who devoted themselves to the good of mankind, had not been productive of a greater measure of public and social virtue than has ever existed where its influence and authority are unknown. It has often had its patriots, who endeavoured to exalt their country, not on the subjugation and distresses of neighbouring nations, but by promoting the happiness of their own; and who submitted to all the privations and sufferings that tyranny could inflict, that they might enjoy and transmit to their offspring the choicest privilege of freedom,—the privilege of worshipping God with an unfettered conscience. Even Mr. Hume allows that to certain individuals who were deeply imbued with the spirit of christianity, and who were animated by views, large, generous, and noble, the nation owes its liberty; perhaps its learning, its industry, commerce, and naval power.

There are deeds of patriotism connected with the modern history of our own country, which are standing memorials of the effect of christian benevolence on public virtue and happiness. There is an act of legislative justice to injured Africa, in abolishing the infamous traffic in human beings, which I hesitate not to ascribe to the growing influence of this principle in directing public opinion. The flow of beneficence proceeding from this divine source has scarcely left any means untried for meliorating the condition of the poor; it has erected asylums for almost every form of human misery, and for all the children of the needy; it has extended itself to the abodes of guilt

and crime, and has attempted to put within the reach of the prisoner, all the comforts that are compatible with the claims of justice; and it has even reached the inferior animals, by procuring for them gentler treatment, and constituting them objects of legal protection. When I consider that this benevolence has been exercised in the midst of great luxury on the one hand, and under the pressure of extraordinary public burdens on the other; and that it receives in its embrace all whom it has the power of benefitting, without distinction of nation or of colour,—I am forcibly impressed with the belief of the profitableness of christianity for “the life that now is, as well as for that which is to come.”

It has often been observed, that even among the civilized nations of antiquity, where luxury had erected her most costly edifices, and where we might have supposed the refinements of taste and of science would have improved the condition of the more helpless branches of the community, there is no evidence that there existed one charitable institution. There was nothing in heathenism that could suggest to the mind the model of pure and elevated patriotism, far less that could cherish the kindly and generous affections of human nature; and with deities subject to all the vices which a polluted imagination might ascribe to them, and uninformed as to the future destinies of man, how could they be otherwise than depraved in themselves, and unconcerned with regard to the happiness or sufferings of others? While all above and beyond them was hid in darkness, they had no scale to measure the distance that intervened between

themselves and the beasts that perish ; they had no surer guides than the lights of reason to point out to them that immortality which raises to a sublime importance the meanest individual of the species ; they wanted all the powerful motives to beneficence which are combined with the redemption of the cross ; and being left to the feebleness of their own efforts, they have illustrated, on an extended scale, the hardness and selfishness of the human heart, when unsanctified by the influences of revelation. In their patriotism, accordingly, they had little regard to the rights and happiness of any other nation but their own.

The patriotic spirit ought to be the spirit of all ; and it may be as pure and as fervid in the breast of a peasant, as in that of a prince. To love his country with a generous, disinterested affection is the duty of man, whatever be his rank or station in society. In reference to this, no man should feel at liberty to live to himself, or to die to himself. The duty, however, which he owes to his country, will vary with the circumstances in which he is placed, and the times in which he lives. But in every case a patriot is distinguished by a generous disinterestedness,—incorruptible integrity,—undaunted firmness,—and a zealous concern for the advancement of the cause of virtue, learning, and religion.

I. He is characterized by a generous disinterestedness. His benevolence is pure and enlarged : he attaches a due value to his own interests ; but he regards them as subordinate to those of his country and of the public. He can sacrifice, and when duty calls, does sacrifice, his honour, emolument, ease, and repu-

tation, for the purpose of benefitting his native land, and of securing, or of gaining blessings to his countrymen. There have been patriots in the British parliament, who have receded from their own undoubted rights, who have forborne to urge any particular claims of their own, at a time when they were suffering for conscience' sake, that they might secure the peace and prosperity of their country. Such unequivocal disinterestedness confers dignity on human nature, and claims our admiration. It is only in proportion as it influences our public conduct, in our attempts to promote the good of our country, that we are in truth patriots.

II. A patriot is distinguished by incorruptible integrity. Without this his affected zeal for the public good is but base hypocrisy : it is only the artful pursuit of place and power, without the principle and the character by which they are merited. But possessing integrity, he will seek the noblest ends by the best means ; and will neither do evil himself, nor countenance the doing of it in others, even though it should appear to be conducive to the prosperity of his country. By no power, by no interest, by no temptation will he be awed or allured into a compliance with measures of iniquity ; but will bear his testimony against them by his voice, by his influence, and by his conduct. Acting in obedience to the authority of conscience and of God, he will not shrink from any duty of this nature, when called to its performance ; and however painful to himself, he will risk the offending of persons of the highest rank, and the most powerful

connexions, rather than connive at the infliction of an injury on his country.

III. A patriot is characterized by undaunted firmness. This qualification is necessary to him who would confer any great good on others. It has rarely, perhaps never, happened that undoubted patriots had not to struggle with much opposition and discouragement, and sometimes with danger. They have had to contend against the indolence and indifference of some, and the selfish and interested views of others; and could they be deterred by contempt and ridicule, or by any personal fears, they would, in the great majority of cases, have soon relinquished their efforts for the good of their country. But it is the tendency of disinterested and enlarged benevolence to raise the mind above considerations of personal inconvenience and hazard; and to stimulate to steadfast and unmoveable exertions in advancing the interests of the community. Fearless in the midst of perils, undaunted, though surrounded by the worldly-minded and the unprincipled, he is not "terrified even into a momentary dereliction of his purpose, nor into a transient coldness in the pursuit of his object."

His is the firmness of principle, of self-denial, of a willingness to submit to privations, and to endure hardships, to ensure the safety, the honour, and the prosperity of his native land. It is the firmness of virtue, sustained by trust in God, and a mind conscious of its own rectitude.

IV. The patriot is distinguished by a zealous concern for advancing the cause of learning, virtue, and

religion. The patriotism that has no regard to this cause, and no aim at its promotion, is spurious ; because the real and permanent well-being of mankind is essentially connected with it. It must have religion for its basis, its rule, and its great and ultimate end.

Here I cannot but remark, that the philosophic scepticism of modern times is far more barren of disinterested and public virtue, and more fruitful of the vices that are hostile to social happiness, than any form of false religion, or than all the forms of false religion combined. Paganism presented some standard of right and wrong, however defective and vicious ; if it did not discover to man the immortality that awaits him, it made no effort to remove the apprehensions of a future state of retribution ; but infidelity, after attempting to prove that there is no God, and that we are accountable to no higher powers than those which are visible, aims at shrouding in everlasting night all that lies beyond the grave. What is there in this to check the selfishness of the human heart, or that can lead to the achievement of any thing great, and generous, and heroic ? What would be the state of that society in which such a system became generally prevalent ?

No man is deserving of the entire confidence of his country, who does not appear to be influenced by the fear of God ; because there is the greatest probability that his real motives are far different from those which are avowed ; and because he will employ whatever power he may obtain in the encouragement of selfish, ambitious, or profligate persons. A professed regard to the interests of religion and virtue is the least we can demand from any man, in whatever rank or station

he may be placed, who expresses a concern for the weal of the community, and who assumes the character of a reformer or benefactor. He may declaim loudly against abuses, and suggest what he may call improvements, but his patriotism is not pure, nor to be relied on, if he shews no disposition to make the measures which he would adopt subserve the advancement of undefiled religion. He may, without such dispositions, be made the instrument of signal good to his country, by Him who can overrule all things for the promotion of his own beneficent designs ; but this does not divest him of the character of a mere selfish politician, destitute of true benevolence and patriotism.

To these remarks I have only to add,—

V. That every man who aims sincerely at promoting the good of his country and of mankind has ample ground of encouragement to persevere in his labours. He may, as has been noticed, meet with opposition and calumny from the timid, the selfish, the seditious, and unprincipled ; but he may, notwithstanding, by his patriotic exertions, be the instrument of incalculable good to his country. If he be justly reckoned a benefactor to his nation, who opens new markets to the products of its industry, and who increases the sources of its wealth, has not he an equal claim to the same character, whose disinterested and upright example is the source of virtue to all around him, and who, by a single improvement in the laws, or the institutions, civil, religious, or literary, of his native land, enlarges the happiness of his people to distant generations ? If the amendment of a single legislative enactment, if the redress of a single politi-

cal grievance, “ may, in its ultimate effects, be the producer of all which we admire in the thousand acts of individual patriotism,—the opener of fields of industry,—the diffuser of commerce,—the embellisher of a land,—the enlightener and blessing of those who inhabit it,”—what encouragement has every man whom Providence has placed in influential situations to be steadfast and unmoveable in his exertions for the public good. We may with propriety address to them the language of the Apostle, “ Be not weary in well doing ; for in due time ye shall reap, if ye faint not.”

Every true patriot will find encouragement from the review of past ages. He will remark that a single individual has often been the instrument, even when surrounded by false friends, and active and inveterate enemies, of saving his country from impending ruin. He will learn from the annals of almost every nation what one pure patriot may effect ; and especially may he learn from the annals of our own, what every christian patriot may, by the blessing of Heaven, hope to attain. It may not be appropriate, perhaps, to allude to Howard, because a nation presented too narrow a sphere for his philanthropy ; he devoted himself to the alleviation of human sufferings over the globe. But I may refer to President Forbes, who, when the liberties and the religion of his country were in danger, succeeded, almost unaided and alone, by his talents and his fortune, in their preservation ; and who afterwards, with a humanity worthy of his principles, exerted the influence of his office and repu-

tation, in mitigating the punishment of the misguided men who had opposed themselves to the authority of the government.

CHAPTER XI.

ON DILIGENCE IN OUR PROPER CALLING.

THIS duty may be placed either under the head of justice or of benevolence, according to the particular light in which we view it. It is enjoined in relation to both by the Apostle Paul. In the following passage he connects it with justice, or that regard which is due from us to the rights of others: "We beseech you, brethren, that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you: that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing*." He elsewhere enforces the practice of the same duty from a principle of benevolence: "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth †."

I shall have occasion, in a subsequent part of this work, to notice the evils of idleness. In the mean time, I remark, that christian benevolence, or a true regard to the happiness of others, will lead us to practice the duty of being quiet, and of diligently attending to our proper business. So true is this

* 1 Thess. iii. 11.

† Ephes. iv. 28.

observation, and so important a part of that character which is formed by the influences of the christian religion, is industry in our proper calling, that wherever it has been enjoyed unmingled with superstition, there have been growing improvement and prosperity.

I am aware that industry, like any other active principle, consists chiefly in habit; and that where this habit has not been formed in early life, it may not be easy to attain it afterwards. It was probably for this reason that the Apostle began his exhortation to diligence in business with the word, *Study*: implying, doubtless, a reluctance to be overcome in steadily practising the duty enjoined. Does not the same remark, however, hold true in regard to many other virtues which we are commanded to cherish? It is not without difficulty that the intemperate man becomes sober, the fretful patient, the proud humble, and the implacable kind and merciful; yet we know that our religion disowns for its disciples the intemperate, the proud, and the implacable; and that it assures us that such persons cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

If the habit of diligence in business were not, in some cases, of more difficult attainment than the contrary, there would, in such cases, be nothing virtuous in industry; but so much stress does the New Testament lay on the active fulfilment of the duties of our vocation, that it refers the authority which enjoins it to the will of God. Its precepts on this head are applicable, I conceive, to us all, whether employed in manual or in mental labour; and we are acting not less against the spirit than the explicit declarations of

the oracles of God, if we are neglecting any of the gifts with which we are intrusted, or are deficient in a zealous discharge of the offices which we occupy.

“ We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition he received of us : for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you ; neither did we eat any man’s bread for nought ; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you. For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some among you which walk disorderly, working not at all, but are busy bodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort, by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread *.”

Numerous and obvious are the advantages which result from the practice of this duty. But that which I have at present more particularly in my view is, the ability which we thus acquire to discharge some of the most important duties of benevolence. We thus are capable, not only of meeting every claim of justice, but of giving to him that needeth. And if the happiness of giving, or the blessedness which accompanies the exercise of active benevolence, be greater than that which can be enjoyed in receiving, ought not every individual, however obscure or humble his rank, to aspire to the attainment of this felicity ? He is thus elevated in his sphere of duty ; and in

* 2 Thess. iv. 6—11.

becoming the voluntary instrument of diffusing the bounty of the Great Parent of all, he increases the sum of his own virtue and happiness.

CHAPTER XII.

CHARITY ; OR, CHRISTIAN BOUNTY.

So important, as an effect of that love which is the fulfilling of the law, is almsgiving, that it is generally designated by the name of charity. The duty of distributing to the poor and needy according to our ability and opportunity, is so obvious from the light of nature, so congenial to those feelings of sympathy and compassion which the Creator has implanted in the human heart, and so clearly established and frequently enforced by revelation, that it has never been questioned. “Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him : because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land : therefore I command thee, saying, thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor and thy needy in the land*.” “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy ; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready

* Deut. xv. 10. 11.

to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life *."

The account which Divine Revelation gives of the principles on which the last judgment will be conducted, is decisive on this subject. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.—Then shall he say also to them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not †."

It is not necessary, for my present purpose, to take notice of the various, and some of them very difficult, points, connected with this important subject. I shall confine myself to the two following questions: First, to what extent, and in what manner, is it our duty to give of our property to the poor? and, secondly, who are the persons to whom we ought to administer charity?

First, To what extent, and in what manner, is it our duty to give of our property to the poor?

It will, I believe, be readily allowed, that we are

* 1 Tim. vi. 17.

† Matt. xxv. 34—44.

bound to give to the extent of our ability. But how is each to ascertain what his ability really is? The income may be relatively great, but the expenditure may be necessarily great also. Without any improper conformity to the corrupt maxims and fashions of the world, our expenses must bear some near proportion to what the usages of society have rendered becoming in the rank in which we are placed. Can we, with decency, greatly retrench, or without incurring the imputation of penuriousness?

Every man must judge for himself on this point: but in forming his judgment, let him remember, that it is clearly his duty to make his charity bear a proportion to his income; and that he ought so to regulate his expenditure, that it may never interfere with the sum which is sacredly allotted to charitable purposes. It should not satisfy his conscience that he can, without any apparent extravagance, consume his whole income; and that he finds at the end of the year that little as he has given away, he has given as much as he can afford. It may be so: but let him seriously ask himself, whether he has included charity in the *necessary* expenditure of the year, “as an article to be increased with every augmentation of his revenue; and as an article never to be suffered intentionally to fall short of a definite proportion of that revenue.”

“Remember also, that the scriptural measure of your obligation to bounty is your reasonable ability, not your artificial inability. The duty of opening your hand wide to your brother, to the poor and to the needy, is not to be escaped by encircling your

hand with voluntary ligatures, and then shewing to how small a compass only it can be expanded. Reduce the external trappings of your station, be it higher or lower, within the narrowest limits which decency of appearance will authorize. Renounce every extravagant indulgence ; be sparing in lawful gratifications which entail expense. The foundation of christian bounty must in part be laid in christian self-denial*.”

It has been often remarked, and the fact is undoubted, that the poor and the inferior ranks of society in general contribute much more liberally in proportion to their income, for the relief of the indigent, than the rich. How readily, in many cases, do they bestow their time, a share of their food, and a mite out of their earnings, on the destitute, the sick, and the aged in their neighbourhood ! Let those who are in affluent circumstances learn from their example how much more liberal they might be, and ought to be, in comparison of from what they actually are. Might they not devote a much larger share of their property to charitable uses without encroaching on any necessary comfort, or reasonable indulgence, without being prevented from providing, with christian moderation, for the future comfort of their children, and without affecting that expenditure which is suitable to the decent maintenance of that rank in which Providence has placed them ?

With regard to the manner in which charity should be exercised, it is clear that before what we give away can with propriety be called by this name, it

* Gisborne's Christian Morality, p. 182.

must be a voluntary and disinterested offering. What is wrung from us through importunity, or bestowed grudgingly, or from interested motives, is not charity.

“ Every man, according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give ; not grudgingly, or of necessity ; for God loveth a cheerful giver.” If we give with true benevolence, we shall give willingly and cheerfully, in obedience to the will of God, and from the pleasure of doing good, and communicating. On a christian mind, the motive suggested in Scripture to the practice of this duty is most powerful :—“ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”

To exercise charity efficiently, we must exercise it appropriately and with discrimination. We must endeavour to distinguish who are fit objects of christian bounty, and adapt the relief we administer to the nature of their wants and circumstances. While we cherish our instinctive compassion, as implanted in our nature for the best ends, we must accustom ourselves to act, not under the humane impulse of the moment, but under the influence of judgment, and fixed principle ; and shew, by the manner in which we give away, that it is not from carelessness as to the possession of property, nor from good nature merely, but from the desire of doing good.

In administering our charity appropriately, it may be necessary for us often to give, not money, but food, clothing, education, moral and religious instruction, consolation, advice, patronage. The kind of

relief which we offer must vary with the exigences of the case. If our brethren are in want, our charity must be of a nature to furnish a supply ; if they are in ignorance, we must give them the means of knowledge ; if they are in sickness, the most acceptable aid which we can afford them may be medicine, or medical skill. “ If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be warmed and filled ; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body ; what doth it profit ? ”

Our charity, too, in order to be pure, must be free from ostentation. It is this vitiating principle, and not the publicity of the act, which our Lord condemns in the rule which he has laid down for the regulation of our conduct in the distribution of our bounty. “ Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them ; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven ; therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward.” But that it is quite possible to give from pure motives, and yet to give publicly, is clear, from another direction of our Lord ; “ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” It has been suggested, I think, with considerable propriety, as a rule of conduct in reference to private and public charity, that when our bounty is beyond our fortune and station, that is, when it is more than could be expected from

us, our charity should be private, if privacy be practicable: when it is not more than might be expected, it may be public. To this general rule there may, for good reasons, be many exceptions. And it should be remembered that our bounty, whether bestowed in private or in public, in order to be conformable to the laws of christian morality, must be given from a sense of duty, and in obedience to the will of God.

This is being charitable upon system, and according to a formed plan. It is to consider ourselves as stewards of what the Great Proprietor of all things has intrusted to our charge; and bound regularly to distribute among the poor and necessitous a portion of his bounty. What have we that has not been given us from above? It is the will of the divine Donor that a portion of what he has bestowed upon us we should *be in the habit* of freely giving away. Hence, in reference to systematic charity, the excellency of the apostolic rule;—a rule which has been observed from time immemorial in the Church of Scotland: “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by in store, as God hath prospered him.” To collect for the poor at the church-doors on every first day of the week, is to afford to all the opportunity of being charitable upon plan, and to enjoy the greater blessedness of giving to that of receiving.

Finally, charity to the poor, in order to be pure and acceptable, must proceed from love to God and man: This, as we have already seen, is the animating principle of all virtuous conduct. It is the more necessary to scrutinize our motives in alms-giving, because this is often, it is to be apprehended, extended under the

influence of views and feelings which, however amiable some of them may be, do not come up to the standard of virtue. Multitudes, doubtless, give of their property to the poor, from natural compassion, and constitutional generosity; from a desire to acquire the esteem of others, and perhaps from the belief that actions of this nature merit for them a happy immortality. It is unnecessary to repeat that no action is truly virtuous which is not performed from a sense of duty, from love to God, and in obedience to his authority.

There is indeed no conduct that secures more generally the esteem of others than a generous attention to suffering humanity. Its excellency and usefulness are admired by all. And as reputation gives us an influence over our fellow-men, and thereby enables us to do greater good in our day and generation, it is desirable to possess it. But we are to seek it as a means, and not as an ultimate end: we are to do our duty to the extent of our opportunity, from pure and disinterested benevolence, and leave the consequence to Him whose wisdom and goodness will amply provide for our happiness.

If we are charitable from this motive, our alms and our prayers shall come up for a memorial before God. —“Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.” “Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed upon the earth: Thou wilt not deliver him into the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him

upon his bed of languishing. Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness."

Thus, it appears, that the obligation of giving to the poor is enforced by express and repeated exhortations to liberality in the sacred Scriptures,—by the revered sayings of Him who has pronounced it to be more blessed to give than to receive,—and by the motives suggested to our instinctive compassion by the numerous wants and sufferings of human nature.

Obvious, however, as this duty is, it must be discharged, in order to answer the end in view, with discretion, and under those restrictions which reason and revelation suggest. Though all the possessions of the rich were lavished on the poor for the supply of their immediate necessities, indigence, and its attendant evils, might not only continue, but would probably be increased by the donation.

Alms must be given in such a way, that neither the giver nor receiver may be injured. We must be satisfied that we give to the extent of our ability, and that we do not go beyond that extent; and that we have wherewith to discharge all the claims of justice, while we exercise liberality to the needy. Our alms must be given in such a manner, and in such cases only, as that distress may not be relieved at the expense of virtue and industry; and that we may not by a thoughtless and mistaken bounty be accumulating the evils which we had hoped to remove, and frustrating the designs of his Providence who has connected laborious exertion with the present lot of human nature. The injunctions, "give to him that asketh of thee,"—and, "if any man will not work,

neither should he eat," rest on precisely the same authority ; and we are not at liberty to encourage a violation of the one, by what we may reckon an obedience to the other.

Secondly, who are the persons to whom we ought to administer charity ? All who suffer, or who are liable to suffer, from ignorance, disease, want, or any other cause, and whose sufferings we have it in our power to alleviate or remove. Nor do I think, that we are at liberty, in every case, to reject even common beggars. In this class there may be some who are unable to labour, and who are, at the same time, destitute of friends and of a home. By what rule of christian morals is it allowable to leave such persons to perish ? When it is quite clear that only the idle, the healthy, and the vicious solicit our alms in this way, we may be excused from contributing to their support, since the effect of our charity will be, to perpetuate idleness and vice. It must always be our duty to relieve hunger and nakedness, by imparting, as we are able, food and clothing ; and to provide lodging, medicine, and medical skill for the sick poor.

Hence, the manifest obligation of contributing liberally to hospitals, infirmaries, and houses of recovery and of refuge. And as religious education, irrespective of its influence on the spiritual interests of man, is a preventive of indigence, as it leads to an honest and persevering industry, we are efficiently exercising charity when we apply a share of our property in its promotion.

We should be led to a selection of the objects of

our beneficence by such circumstances as these ; their having become unable to work, or aged, in our service ; their connexion with the christian congregation, parish, and neighbourhood to which we belong ; their general industry and fidelity in labouring to supply their own necessities, though, from affliction, or want of employment, they are reduced to poverty ; and their piety, uprightness, and modesty. Their being of the household of faith gives them the strongest claims to our christian love and liberality. Whatever is done for their comfort, our blessed Lord regards as done to himself. A cup of cold water given to them, because they are his disciples, shall in no wise lose its reward *.

It is no uncommon thing for persons to excuse themselves from giving to the poor, on the ground,—

I. That their liberality does not procure them a return of gratitude. Though this were true, which, as it respects the great majority of cases, I do not admit, it only shews that those who urge it as an objection have erroneous views of duty and of charity. We must give, if we give aright, not with a view to gratitude, but from a sense of duty. The characteristic of true charity is, that it is disinterested, proceeding from pure benevolence. “ If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye ? Do not even the publicans the same ? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others ? Do not even the publicans so ? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect ;—for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the

* Matt. x. 42.

good, and sendeth rain on the just, and on the unjust *.”

II. They are liable to be imposed on. The answer to this objection was stated, when I pointed out the duty of exercising charity with judgment and discrimination. Let us not disobey the will of God, impair our own benevolent feelings, and withhold relief from those who really require it, because there is a possibility of our occasionally being deceived.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHARITY ; OR, PROFESSIONAL ASSISTANCE.

THE most valuable charity to the poor, because it is often the most appropriate and permanently available, is professional assistance. There are maladies of the mind which no contribution of property can alleviate ; and how can benevolence be exercised to greater advantage than in the bestowment of medical skill and medicine, for the purpose of restoring health to the person on whose labour and life the family depend for bread?

I. The ministers of religion, in the benevolent exercise of their sacred profession, have it in their power to bestow the noblest charity. In removing ignorance, in rectifying error, in declaring the disease, in pointing out the remedy, in leading to repose with humble confidence on the sure foundation of trust, and

* Matt. v. 45—48.

in directing the hopes to that immortal happiness which will not deceive our expectations,—they may do the greatest good to their fellow-creatures. The sanctity of their office and character, and the disinterestedness of their conduct, give them great influence over the poor, and make them welcome visitants to their dwelling-places. In communicating spiritual instruction and consolation to the mourner, the bereaved, the destitute, and the dying, they are exercising true charity, and in a way appropriate to the wants of the persons to whom they minister.

When to this they add, the oversight of the schools, especially of the poorer classes in their neighbourhood ; and, as in Scotland, take the principal charge of the distribution of the funds destined to the support of the poor, they discharge a work of benevolence of a nature the most important to their fellow-creatures and to their country.

II. Medical men have it also in their power to bestow charity very extensively on the poor, by affording them medicine and the benefit of their professional skill when necessary. To the honour of this profession, its members very generally are, in this way, instruments of incalculable good, by the time and attention which they gratuitously bestow. In the discharge of their duty they have numerous opportunities of witnessing families whose laborious industry had hitherto kept them from indigence, but who, in consequence of the continued illness with which they are visited, are fast falling from that place in society which they have most laudably struggled to maintain. To hasten to their relief, by humanely prescribing to them, and cheering

them with the hope of recovery, is one of the noblest works of charity, and one which medical gentlemen are frequently accustomed to perform.

III. Lawyers, and country gentlemen, by seasonable counsel, may prevent litigation among the poor ; and thus preserve them from probable ruin. This is, in regard to them, a duty of humanity and benevolence. Its discharge, indeed, requires time and patience ; but the peace and reconciliation which may be produced by it, and the saving of property, and perhaps of morals, are objects of great importance in the estimation of every man who thinks aright. The interposition of advice and friendly suggestion on the part of those who possess the confidence of the poor, may be the means of saving them from the necessity of directly contributing, at a future period, to supply their wants.

CHAPTER XIV.

ON THE DUTIES OF PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

LET us now proceed to consider the duties of justice. These are far too numerous to be noticed in detail. Some of those which will fall to be treated under a subsequent head, ought to be slightly noticed here—such as the relative duties. Parents, for example, are not only stimulated by the parental feelings to provide for their children, but they are required to do so by the demands of justice. They are the natural guardians of their offspring ; and reason and revela-

tion suggest the obligation of watching over their helpless years, and of training them up in the nurture and admonition of God. There are also certain duties due from the children to the parents, for the faithful performance of which there is not only provision made in the filial affections ; but in maturer years, the claims of justice powerfully plead for their fulfilment. To them they are indebted for the preservation and protection of their lives during the years of helplessness and childhood ;—to them, and especially to one of them, they owe the growth and gradual development of the kindlier sympathies of their nature ;—to them they are obliged for the elements of that education by which they are preparing, or have been already prepared, for usefulness and happiness in society ;—and to them, above all, is due their gratitude, if they instructed them in the fear of God, and ceased not, by their exertions and their prayers, to point out the way to everlasting happiness. Hence the terms in which the authoritative injunction of revelation is enforced ; “ Children, obey your parents in the Lord ; for this is right. Honour thy father and mother, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live long on the earth.”

The natural affections, as well as the Scriptures, establish the duty of parents to maintain their children. “ If any provide not for his own, especially for those of his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel *.”

They are also, for the same reasons, bound to give them such a training or education, as may fit them for

* 1 Tim. v. 8.

passing comfortably and creditably through the sequel of life. If they are to acquire subsistence by manual labour, they ought betimes to be inured to restraint, and to be provided with regular employment. If they are to depend on the exercise of their talents in a profession, it is criminal in the parents to withhold, from avarice, the means of procuring that knowledge, and those accomplishments, that will fit them for entering on its duties with a fair prospect of success. Nor are they less blameable, should they allow them to consume that time in foolish amusements, which should be devoted to studies necessary to their future honour and usefulness.

It may be more difficult to ascertain the extent to which parents are bound to make pecuniary provision for the future wants of their children. It is clear that this ought not to be prosecuted at the expense of the claims of justice, and of charity, reasonably proportioned to our income. It has been remarked by all who have been much conversant with the world, that with regard to sons especially, a good education, and virtuous and industrious habits, give them a far better chance of this world's happiness, than the possession of a large capital at the outset of their course. And with regard to the superior enjoyment of acquiring a fortune, above to the getting of it already provided by others, there can be no question.

The duty of parents making provision for the virtue of their children is of a still higher order. This cannot be done effectually without the union of example with precept. Should the child make the discovery that the parent in his admonitions is only acting a

part,—and he will sooner or later make the discovery when such is actually the case,—he will receive his admonitions as he would “hear the same maxims from the mouth of a player. And when once this opinion has taken possession of the child’s mind, it has a fatal effect upon the parents’ influence in all subjects ; even those, in which he himself may be sincere and convinced. Whereas a silent, but observable regard to the duties of religion, in the parent’s own behaviour, will take a sure and gradual hold of the child’s disposition, much beyond formal reproofs and chidings, which being generally prompted by some present provocation, discover more of anger than of principle, and are always received with a temporary alienation and disgust *.”

CHAPTER XV.

ON MASTERS AND SERVANTS.

THE mutual relation of masters and servants also gives rise to certain duties of justice. Both parties enter into stipulations, and both are laid under obligations. Those who serve enter into engagements with their employers, which they are bound with readiness and submission to fulfil. They are exposed to temptations peculiar to their station,—a culpable negligence in the business they have undertaken, dishonesty in

* See the Chapter on the Duties of Parents and Children in Personal and Family Religion.

purloining their master's property, or a disrespectful conduct towards him ; and it requires a deep sense of religion to maintain an undeviating consistency amid these and many other allurements to what is wrong. But the virtue of resisting and overcoming such temptations, in proportion to the difficulty of its acquirement and exercise, will be approved and rewarded by Him who looks with the same impartial eye on all his creatures, and who will judge every man according to his works. The victory won in such a situation by a truly christian servant over the evil feelings of envy and discontent, is far greater in the estimation of Him who weigheth the spirits, than that of those whose moral trial is less severe, and who are less assailed by incentives to sin. Christian servants are required to be faithful in the discharge of their engagements, not so much from the consideration that their neglect or violation may be punished as a breach of justice, as from the higher motives of the fear of God, and the authority of Christ. " Servants," says the Apostle Paul, " be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, in singleness of heart, as unto Christ ; not with eye-service as men-pleasers ; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart ; with good will doing service, as to the Lord and not to men ; knowing that whatsoever good thing a man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

Masters, also, have duties to perform to their servants, which, by the laws of justice, they are bound to discharge. There are temptations to neglect their

fulfilment, at least, to neglect their uniform and complete fulfilment. From the power over others which is given and assumed, will there not be an inducement to ask more from them than they can reasonably perform ; to bear towards them an unfeeling demeanour, to disregard with unchristian apathy their moral and religious wants? Are not masters sometimes in danger of placing before their servants, by their example and otherwise, temptations to a neglect of duty, to dishonesty, and to the indulgence of a disrespectful conduct towards their superiors? “ They,” it has been remarked, “ are capable of enjoyment, like ourselves ; and there are many enjoyments of which we may legally deprive them, by the constraints to which they have submitted themselves, according to the common usage of such personal contracts—but which are not incompatible with the fulfilment of all their duties to us ; and which it would therefore, *morally*, be as wrong to prevent, as it would be to prevent a similar amount of enjoyment, when the power of preventing it was not legally ours. He who, to the utmost of his power, converts the freedom of domestic service into slavery—who allows no liberty—no recreation, no pleasure, which he can interdict, has all the guilt of a tyrannical master of a slave ; or rather, has a guilt that exceeds the guilt of such oppression, because it is an oppression that is exercised in a land of freedom. Every indulgence, therefore, which does not interfere with the domestic duties, and which does not tend to vitiate the character, is a duty which the master owes. “ Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal ; knowing that ye also have a

master in heaven, and that there is no respect of persons with him."

In a word, should we at any time feel uncertain as to some of the duties which we owe as children and parents, as masters and servants, as teachers and taught,—as inferiors, superiors, and equals; or, though not uncertain as to their nature, yet reluctant to perform them, we have only to imagine ourselves in the situation of others, with *their* views and feelings made our own, and we shall find that our self-love will powerfully enforce the claims of benevolence and justice. That inordinate regard to our own interests and gratifications, which, by perverting our views in judging of the rights of our neighbour, forms the chief obstacle in the way of our duty towards them, is thus brought to plead on their behalf; and having been led to decide for them with the same scrupulous fidelity which we would have employed for ourselves, we cannot, without doing violence to our own convictions, do otherwise than act agreeably to our decisions. All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them*.

* See the Author's work on *Personal and Family Religion*, chap. iii. iv. v.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DUTY OF REFRAINING FROM INJURING THE PERSONS
OR LIVES OF OTHERS.

It is difficult to enumerate the various ways in which man can inflict an injury on man, and in which, consequently, he transgresses the will of his Maker, and violates the obligations of eternal justice. He is clearly bound to respect the life, property, and character of others—his promises, asseverations or oaths, contracts, subscriptions to articles of belief, made in reference to them,—and their virtue and happiness.

We begin with the consideration of our obligations to abstain from injuring the persons or lives of others. The divine law has clearly defined this duty, and enforced its observance by the most awful sanctions. “Thou shalt not kill. Surely your blood of your lives will I require ; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of men ; at the hand of every man’s brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed ; for in the image of God made he man.”

God alone is the giver of life ; he gives the law to guard its preservation ; and in no case can it be innocently taken away when he does not grant the permission. Though he has given to man a dominion over the inferior animals, this power would not entitle him to deprive them of life, unless the great Lord and Ruler of all had so defined it. This is allowed him

in the two following cases : first, when he intends to use them for food. “ The fear of you, and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea ; into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you ; even as the green herb have I given you all things.” Secondly, when they are destructive and dangerous. That we are at liberty to deprive them of life in such circumstances, is clear from the passage now quoted, and from the inherent right of every man to defend his person and property.

With these exceptions, we are bound to refrain from injuring the lives, or impairing the enjoyments of the lower animals ; and, consequently, to avoid all those brutal modes in which this defenceless part of the creation is distressed and tortured. We cannot but condemn, as immoral in its nature and tendency, a practice to which children are sometimes habituated, that of exercising the most wanton cruelty to animals, and of employing their ingenuity in inflicting sufferings. Irrespectively of the amount of suffering which they thus create, merely for their amusement, the practice is calculated to deaden every better feeling, and fit them for perpetrating hereafter, on a wider theatre, deeds of criminal selfishness, inhumanity, if not of still greater atrocity. If it be the characteristic of a righteous man that he regardeth the life of his beast, we cannot but consider the contrary conduct as the mark of the unfeeling and the wicked.

As there are exceptions to the general law concerning life-preservation with respect to the inferior

animals, so are there in regard to man. His life may be taken away when it is clearly necessary for our own defence. In such a case reason suggests that we are to preserve our own life, though it be at the expense of that of another. But revelation gives the warrant in explicit terms. "If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him." By parity of reason we are justifiable in all similar cases to defend ourselves and our families. Hence, the only ground on which war is justifiable. If individuals have the right to defend themselves from the assassin, and the robber, this right surely does not cease when they are assailed by a nation in their lives and property. They can only repel such an assault collectively; and they are acting in conformity with the divine law, when they unite, and use suitable means for such a repulsion.

The life of man may be also taken away when he commits crimes worthy of death. There is a crime to which the law of God has explicitly affixed this punishment. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." It has been doubted whether it be just or expedient to annex death to any other offence. That it is so, appears to me clear from the fact, that the Jewish law connected this punishment with other crimes besides murder,—such as adultery, filial stubbornness, and idolatry,—a circumstance which proves at least that there may be cases in which it is lawful to visit various offences with this last and heaviest award. But this can only be allowable when it is quite manifest that no inferior punishment is adequate. All, therefore,

who have in every age of the world been doomed to suffer under tyranny and oppression, and by the forms of law have been put to death for maintaining a good conscience, have been deprived of life contrary to the divine law, and are considered by the Supreme Judge as murdered.

Conscience, seconding the sentence of the law, announces to the murderer the fearful nature of his crime. “The Almighty Creator and Preserver of man has provided against the frequency of this crime, by rendering the contemplation of it something, from which even the most abandoned shrink with a loathing which is, perhaps, the only human feeling that still remains in their heart; and the commission of it a source of a wilder agony of horror than can be borne, even by the gloomy heart which was capable of conceiving the crime. When we read or hear of the assassin, who is driven by the anguish of his own conscience, to reveal to those whom most he dreaded, the secret which he was most anxious to hide—addressing himself to the guardians, not of the mere laws which he has offended, but of the individual whom their protection, at that moment which is ever before his memory, was too powerless to save:—when we think of the number of years that in many instances of this kind have elapsed, since the mortal blow was given, and of the inefficacy of time, which effaces all other sorrows, to lessen that remorse, which no one suspected to be the cause of the wasting of the cheek, and the gloomy melancholy of the eye,—can we fail to regard a spectacle like this, as an awful testimony to the goodness of that Almighty

Protector of the world, who proportions the internal restraints of conscience, to the iniquity that needs to be restrained, and to the amount of evil that would flow from it, if unrestrained—and who, seeming to leave the life of every individual at the mercy of every arm, has secured for it a defence, in the very bosom of him whose hand was already almost raised to give the blow*.”

The actions in which this crime is involved doubtless participate of its guilt. Of this description are all those actions in which there is shewn a criminal disregard to human life, even though the direct object should not be to take it away. To form or to connive at plans for the death of others, or even to wish it, renders us liable to the charge of this most heinous crime. The indulgence of the evil passions that lead to it, as the divine law teaches us, such as unreasonable anger, envy and hatred, are evils of the same nature. “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill ; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment : But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment ; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council ; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.” He that hateth his brother is a murderer. By unkindness, ingratitude, faithlessness, improper restraints and severity, and by oppression, may we participate in the guilt of that greatest of crimes, the shortening of the lives of others.

*. Brown's Lectures, vol. iv. p. 191.

Duellers, unquestionably, are chargeable with this guilt. Their design is to gratify mortified pride by unwarrantably, and in express contradiction to the divine command, taking away life. It has the additional aggravation of being committed deliberately, under the influence of revengeful and implacable feelings, and without those excuses which the murderer in many cases can offer in extenuation. He perpetrates the deed, perhaps, under the agitation of extreme passion; but the duellist coolly aims at the life of a fellow-creature, and exposes his own. To avoid the imputation of cowardice, does he thus shew himself to be a very coward, by not daring to bear, what many christian martyrs have borne before him, the scorn and reproach of the world, and by deserting the post, the friends, the duties, which God has assigned him. In general, too, the persons who are chargeable with this crime are educated, have the means of being acquainted with the atrocious enormity of murder in every case, and of knowing that in them it is most deeply aggravated, inasmuch as they aim at taking away life contrary to the feelings of humanity, to the unbiassed voice of reason and of conscience, to the requirements of law, and to the command of the Eternal God.

In short, in whatever light the crime of duelling is viewed, whether as a deliberate violation of the law of God, an offence against our fellow-creature, and as most pernicious in its tendency and consequences, it must be pronounced a foul and atrocious murder. And what is the express injunction of God regarding the person chargeable with this iniquity? “Ye shall

take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death : but he shall surely be put to death. Ye shall not pollute the land wherein ye are ; for blood, it defileth the land ; and the land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DUTY OF AVOIDING WHATEVER HAS A DIRECT TENDENCY TO ABRIDGE HUMAN LIFE—DRUNKENNESS.

THE duty of abstaining from injuring the person or life of our fellow-creatures extends to all the means that have a direct tendency to abridge human existence. One of these is drunkenness,—a crime, the guilt of which may be estimated by the evils immediate and remote which it produces. This habit, like all other habits, is formed gradually, and advances from occasional acts of inebriety to frequent and regular intoxication. The circumstances which lead to its formation, or rather which present ever-recurring inducements to its formation, are obvious,—such as example, unrestrained access to strong drink, evil company, and, in some cases, depression of spirits, from which relief is sought in a stimulant, the frequent use of which aggravates the malady. When the mind loses its usual tone and energy by unexpected calamities, by the loss of reputation, of friends, or of property ; by disappointment in favourite pursuits, how often is there recourse to strong drink as affording a temporary remedy !

The evil and odiousness of this sin appear by the

thorough degradation of the man who is subject to it. For the time, the faculties which distinguish him from the inferior animals are merged beneath the nature of the brute ; and divested of reason and conscience, he is unfitted for the discharge of any one of the functions of an intellectual, a moral, and an immortal being. In this debased condition, without understanding, with excited passions, what deeds of atrocity is he not capable of committing ! What may he not suffer self in his person, exposed to the most extreme danger, in which life is often lost ! What loss may he not sustain in his property, from those who are ever ready to seize upon their fellow-creatures as their prey ! How wasteful to his property is the indulgence of that habit which he has formed ? How ruinous and disgraceful to himself, his connexions, and dependants ! Is he a parent ? How melancholy is the spectacle which his children are doomed to witness in the person of that being whom nature teaches them to venerate ! Is he a son, the object of parental fondness, the person who was looked to as the stay and the hope of his family ? What disappointment and suffering does he inflict on those whom he should feel anxious to preserve from pain, and whom he is bound to cherish and to honour ! Deserted by friends, ejected from situations of trust, with the loss of reputation, the waste of property, he is rapidly advancing to poverty, disease, and death.

How great is the guilt with which the drunkard is chargeable in the misimprovement of his talents, the loss of his usefulness, and the wide and lasting misery which in many cases he brings on himself and his family. Though he should not succeed in making the

other members of it drunkards like himself, he squanders the property which would furnish them with comfort and respectability,—and the tendency of his example is to make his children irreligious and immoral. He withholds from them instruction, and government, and encouragement; and he himself leads the way to the chambers of hell. His career is usually terminated by self-destruction, or violent death; while his soul, has long been hardened in sin, and its condition rendered hopeless. Of all the melancholy examples of the woful consequences of evil habits long indulged, to be found in the history of mankind, I know not one more truly deplorable, more burdened with guilt, more hardened beyond the efficacy of means, and more apparently given up to reprobation, than the confirmed drunkard.

What are the means of avoiding, or of being delivered from this awful vice? We must be on our guard against the causes that naturally lead to it. It has been remarked that when the habit of drunkenness is formed it is of all evil habits the most difficult to be broken. In this case, entire abstinence, or entire and eternal ruin is the only alternative. The companions, the example that lead to it, and if possible, the very place on which the habit has been formed, should be forsaken.

The evil that drunkenness is producing over the world, and in our own land, is incalculable. It is impairing the health, wasting the property, and excluding from education and knowledge thousands of mankind. It is rendering idle and profligate those on whose industry and economy families are depend-

ing for bread; and making those habitations that would otherwise be nurseries of virtue, the abode of contention, vice, and misery. How much it is retarding the progress and the triumphs of the gospel, it is unnecessary for me to say. It seems more than any other vice subservient to the purposes of that evil Spirit, who is described as a murderer from the beginning, as a liar and the father of lies;—and who by this, as by other artifices, prevents the light of the glorious gospel of God from shining into the mind. The amount of evil that issues from it in a large city, in the ruin of health, the waste of life, the destruction of the soul, is greater than the corresponding good which the friends of religion, and the ministers of the gospel, with their combined labours and efforts, can accomplish.

Of such vast importance, and so numerous are the obligations included in the duty of obeying the divine command in holding life sacred. It is an easy and natural extension of it to apply it to the life of the soul; and to infer from it the obligation of doing all in our power to place the means by which this life is conveyed within the reach of our fellow-creatures. If we are to care for the body, can we be innocent if we neglect the health and the happiness of the immortal part,—the soul? Is it not to this that our chief attention should be continually directed, as that which is to live when the body moulders in the dust, and which is capable of happiness or of misery for ever? “What shall it profit a man, though he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” It was to

impart this eternal happiness to man, that God has instituted an economy of grace, that “ He has so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” While he commands not to impair or to injure the life of the body, he enjoins not to disregard that better life which he bestows, and to make choice of that good part that shall never be taken from us.

CHAPTER XVIII.

PROPERTY.

We are required by the law written on the heart, not less than by the law which was written on tables of stone, to refrain from injuring the property of others. “ Thou shalt not steal,” is the authoritative command of heaven ; which evidently requires the lawful procuring and furthering the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others ; and forbids whatsoever doth or may unjustly hinder our own or our neighbour’s wealth, or outward estate. To take our neighbour’s property, therefore, and to turn it to our own use, without his consent, is unjust and sinful.

We can much more easily trace the origin and progress of property than satisfy ourselves, at least in some cases, of the justice or expediency of the tenure by which it is held. That one man should retain possession of what is more than adequate for the maintenance of a thousand, while there are many

around him who are scarcely able to procure a subsistence, is an order of things which at first view seems as little consonant to our reason as it is to our feelings. “ You see the ninety-nine toiling and scraping together a heap of superfluities for one,—and this one too, oftentimes the feeblest and the worst of the whole set,—a child, a madman, or a fool ;—getting nothing for themselves all the while, but a little of the coarsest of the provision which their own industry produces ; looking quietly on, while they see the fruits of all their labours spent or spoiled ; and if one of the number take or touch a particle of the hoard, the others joining against him, and hanging him for the theft.”

It surely is necessary that reasons, ample and sufficient, should be assigned to justify this seemingly harsh inequality. Such reasons do exist, and their sufficiency will presently be made to appear.

Every man, doubtless, has a right to the fruits of his own labour. To deprive him of any part of this without an equivalent is unjust. For if it were allowable to take away a share of the fruit of his industry, without an equivalent, the order and designs of human society would be frustrated ;—men would rob from others that to which they have no good claim :—property, being wasted by the idle and the profligate, would soon disappear, and the most fertile parts of the earth would become a barren wilderness. The authority of the Supreme Legislator and Proprietor decides the question ; and gives to every man the exclusive right to that which he has acquired by his ingenuity or labour.

But without a reasonable degree of security in the enjoyment of property, who would undergo the toil and the trouble necessary to its attainment? Who would relinquish that indolence which is so natural to man, and steadily pursue a course of industrious exertion? The history of society shews that the prospect of wealth is not of itself a motive sufficiently powerful, unaccompanied with the security which law and regular government afford. Hence the necessity as well as the origin of laws for securing to the rightful owner the undisturbed possession of his property. In proportion as such laws are impartially enforced will industry and all its fruits increase and multiply. In confirmation of this remark many illustrations might be given from the history of every civilized people,—proving that in the most fertile countries the inhabitants may be poor and indolent and wretched, while on a less genial soil, they may be active, and rich, and happy.

“Perhaps there is no part of Europe,” says a distinguished traveller, “more fruitful than the Valteline, and yet there is no country in which the peasants are more wretched. The first and principal cause is the form of government*.” “What a contrast,” says Brydone, an intelligent traveller, “is there between this (Sicily) and the little uncouth country of Switzerland. To be sure the dreadful consequences of oppression can never be set in a more striking opposition to the blessings and charms of liberty. Switzerland, the very excrescence of Europe, where nature seems to have thrown out all her cold and stagnating

* Coxe.

humours; full of lakes, marshes, and woods, and surrounded by immense rocks, and everlasting mountains of ice, the barren but sacred ramparts of liberty:—Switzerland, enjoying every blessing where every blessing seems to have been denied; whilst Sicily, covered by the most luxuriant hand of nature, where heaven seems to have showered down its richest blessings with the utmost prodigality, groans under the most abject poverty, and with a pale and wan visage starves in the midst of plenty. It is liberty alone that works this standing miracle. Under her plastic hands the mountains sink, the lakes are drained, and these rocks, these marshes, these woods.”

I shall only adduce another illustration, from Dr. Clarke's *Travels*, to shew how much the human character is degraded, and the design of society frustrated by the insecurity of property, whether it arise from the weakness or from the oppression of the government. “In Circassia,” he observes, “that the sower scattering the seed, or the reaper who gathers the sheaves, are constantly liable to an assault; and the implements of husbandry are not more essential to the harvest than the carbine, the pistol, and the sabre.” Of the isle of Cyprus, he says, “the soil everywhere exhibited a white marly clay, said to be exceedingly rich in its nature, although neglected. The Greeks are so oppressed by their Turkish masters, that they dare not cultivate the land; the harvest would instantly be taken away from them if they did. Their whole aim seems to be, to scrape together barely sufficient, in the course of the whole year, to

pay their tax to the Governor. The omission of this is punished by torture or by death : and in case of their inability to supply the impost, the inhabitants fly from the island. So many emigrations of this sort happen during the year, that the population of Cyprus rarely exceeds 60,000 persons, a number formerly insufficient to have peopled one of its towns."

These remarks, suggested by a survey of the actual condition of European nations, shew that unless property is secured to the rightful owners,—that is, to the persons by whose industry and labour it is acquired, mankind would remain inactive and degraded. It is not so much wealth, as the secure possession of it, that forms the incentive to persevering exertion and enterprise.

It was observed, that it was labour originally that constitutes the right of property. Though in an early stage of society all the members of the community possessed all things in common, it would soon be found that all would be more active, and, consequently, that there would be a much greater abundance acquired, if each were allowed to have an exclusive property in the fruits of his own industry. The hunter, the fisher, the herdsman would become more careful and dexterous, when they found that their subsistence depended on their success ;—and their industry would be stimulated, not merely by the prospect of food, but by the consequence which they would gradually assume in the community, from their power of procuring a greater supply of the necessaries of life. This would introduce a degree of inequality in circumstances ; and this inequality, from the operation

of the same cause being gradually on the increase, would render it necessary to appropriate the houses and land which at first were enjoyed in common. On general grounds it would seem that in this division he would have the best right to a field by whom it was first cleared and cultivated ; and he who built a house would have an exclusive right to possess it. But the circumstances in which the children of such parents came into the world were very different from those in which their fathers were placed ; and this change of circumstances would give rise to a new set of laws regulating the succession of property. The parents had laboured, and the accumulation of their property was the result of their labour ; but to whom should this property descend, but to those whom Providence has rendered so entirely dependent on their protection ? The principles of equity, then, as well as the most comprehensive views of general expediency, would allot the field which the father by his labour had made fertile to the son.

Many are the advantages which arise from the institution of property, and even from that inequality which it occasions ; and though the number of inconveniences may be unnecessarily augmented among a people who have arrived at a high degree of civilization, the benefits which, on the whole, accompany this order of things, are essential to the progressive improvement and happiness of mankind. Without the institution of property,—

I. None could ever enjoy abundance. This were true if our earth were as fertile as paradise. For, on the supposition that there were no exclusive and indi-

vidual right, the fruit would be gathered before it came to maturity, and animals killed before they were fit for food: for, who would protect what was not his own; or, who would economize, when all the stores of nature were open to him? There would be a strange mixture of plenty, waste, and famine. Paley illustrates this, by remarking, that in this country, where the only common property consists in hedge-nuts and blackberries, they are seldom allowed to ripen.

But in truth, our earth produces comparatively little without cultivation. And who would labour to make it fruitful unless they were assured of being allowed to share in its fruits? What husbandman would sow if he were deprived of the hope that he should also reap? And what would be the consequence of such an order of things, but that the scanty and miserable population would be reduced to the extremest want?

II. Without the institution of property, the fruits and conveniences of industry, which are so essential to the improvement of the species, could have had no existence. The division of labour, which has tended to elevate man as a moral and intellectual being, is but one of these fruits; and yet, how many comforts does this put within the reach of the poorest inhabitant of a civilized country. The accommodation of those in the lowest ranks of life, as is forcibly observed by Dr. Adam Smith, is the product of the united industry of many people. "Without the assistance and co-operation of many thousands, the very meanest person in a civilized country could not be provided, even according to what we very falsely

imagine the easy and simple manner in which he is commonly accommodated. Compared, indeed, with the more extravagant luxury of the great, his accommodation must, no doubt, appear extremely simple and easy; and yet it may be true, perhaps, that the accommodation of an European Prince does not always so much exceed that of an industrious and frugal peasant as the accommodation of the latter exceeds that of many an African King, the absolute master of the lives and liberties of ten thousand naked savages."

If there had been no appropriation of property, all men must have continued to till the ground, that they might procure a scanty and insecure subsistence: there could have been no part of the produce of the earth reserved for mere intellectual labourers; and thus the poets, philosophers, and legislators, who have exalted our common nature, would not have had the opportunity of transmitting to succeeding generations the lights of genius and of science.

These are thy blessings, Industry! rough power!
Whom labour still attends, and sweat, and pain;
Yet the kind source of every gentle art,
And all the soft civility of life.—
O waste of time! till Industry approach'd
And rous'd him from his miserable sloth;
His faculties unfolded; pointed out
Where lavish nature the directing hand
Of art demanded; show'd him how to raise
His feeble force by the mechanic powers,
To dig the mineral from the vaulted earth,
On what to turn the piercing rage of fire,
On what the torrent, and the gather'd blast;
Gave the tall ancient forest to his axe;
Taught him to chip the wood and hew the stone,
Till by degrees the finish'd fabric rose;
Tore from his limbs the blood-polluted fur,

And wrapt him in the woolly vestment warm ;—
Nor stopp'd at barren bare necessity ;
But still advancing bolder, led him on
To pomp, to pleasure, elegance, and grace ;—
Set science, wisdom, glory in his view,
And bade him be the lord of all below.

If the institution of property has produced effects so numerous and valuable, we must believe that its existence is owing, not to casual circumstances, but to the will of God ; and it would, therefore, be surprising, if, in a revelation of his will, there should be no mention of an ordinance so essential to the moral improvement and happiness of man. Of the ten commandments of the law, one has an exclusive reference to the right of property ; and enjoins the duty of refraining from appropriating to ourselves the property of our neighbours. From other parts of the sacred volume we learn, that there is much implied in the performance of this duty,—that we are bound to shun fraud in all its forms,—and every art by which we might injure either directly or indirectly the property of others. The precept obviously prohibits the detention in whole or in part of the hire of the labourer, the acquisition of gain by base and unlawful means, and the reception of bribes in the discharge of important trusts. Among the offences which exclude from the kingdom of heaven, the unrepented commission of injustice in relation to the property of others is enumerated : “ Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ? ”

However painfully the inequalities arising out of the institution of property may press on some individuals, there are obvious considerations, besides its

being the declared will of God, to induce them cheerfully to acquiesce, and steadfastly to practise the things that are just and honest. Though they have nothing to depend on but their industry, while many around them have been born to fortunes, they surely cannot fare worse than if these fortunes had not been made by the savings of successive generations. Would they have been better fed or more comfortably clothed if mankind had possessed all things in common;—and if in place of having moved onwards to the habits and the accommodations of civilized life, they had continued to nestle in the cavern, and to cover themselves in the skins of animals? Do they complain that they have nothing, while others by their superabundance are elevated above manual labour? Let them remember that but for the institution of property, and that consequent inequality of circumstances which necessarily accompanies it, this surplus could never have existence;—there could, therefore, have been no fund for rewarding industry; all would be on the same level of penury and wretchedness; all would often be in want, and none would have permanent plenty; all would be poor, and none could possibly become rich. The poorest among us would be poorer than they now are, with the additional inconvenience of finding their industry of little use to them, while all around them presented a scene of misery.

The children of the poorest parents in a civilized country are born to no inconsiderable inheritance;—to an inheritance of far greater value than that of an African Prince—the absolute master of the lives and liberties of ten thousand naked savages. How su-

perior is their habitation, their food, their clothing, and their attendance, from what they could have had if the rights of property had never existed. In such a country as our own, where the blessings of an elementary education are within the reach of all, and where the restrictions on trade are slender and few, every man has the fair prospect of obtaining, as the reward of his industry, a sufficiency for himself and his family. He who has health to labour, and who has the opportunity of selling his labour to the best advantage, has it in his power to place himself above indigence. Nor will it be doubted, that he who obtains this blessing as the reward of his labour, has much greater happiness in its acquisition, than he whose fortune has been accumulated by others;—so that in place of repining at what he might otherwise regard as an unequal distribution of Providence, he has much ground for thankfulness that the preponderance of substantial enjoyment is so decidedly in his favour.

The duty of acting with honesty towards the property of others, and of cultivating a contented state of mind, may, on these grounds alone, be enforced. But revelation suggests many other views to reconcile us to the practice of this duty. It teaches us that the providence of God, which ruleth over all, makes man the special object of its care; that He who feeds the raven when he cries, and clothes with beauty the grass of the field, will support him under necessities and distresses, and supply the means for their removal; and that the trials and sufferings of the present state are overruled, for promoting his real and

everlasting good. It teaches us to look for our chief happiness to higher sources of enjoyment than this world can afford; while it presents to the contemplation of our faith a 'new heaven and a new earth, "where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither any more pain; the former things having passed away."

CHAPTER XIX.

IN WHAT DOES THE RIGHT OF PROPERTY CONSIST?

DIFFERENT solutions have been given of the question, In what does the right of property consist?—and they all appear to contain a portion of truth. That principle, doubtless, affords the just solution which unites these together, and to which, as a general law, they are referrible.

Some moralists are of opinion, that the right of property consists in what may be called the general consent of mankind;—that when a particular person was allowed to occupy a piece of ground, others, by tacit consent, relinquished their right to it;—that as the piece of ground belonged to mankind collectively, they, when they permitted the first peaceable occupier to remain on it, ceased to have any claim on it. This opinion resolves itself into the right of possession; a right, which, for the greater part, it is expedient to consider as valid in a civilized country.

Others are of opinion, and of this number is Locke, that each man's labour is his own exclusively: that

by occupying a piece of ground, a man inseparably mixes his labour with it; by which means it afterwards becomes his own, as it cannot be taken from him without depriving him, at the same time, of something which is indisputably his. To distinguish this right from that of possession, I would call it the right of labour. This, as Paley observes, is a fair ground, where the value of the labour bears a considerable proportion to the value of the thing; or, where the thing derives its chief use and value from the labour. Thus, game and fish, though they be common whilst at large in the woods or water, instantly become the property of the person that catches them; because an animal, when caught, is much more valuable than when at liberty; and this increase of value, which is inseparable from, and makes a great part of, the whole value, is strictly the property of the fowler or fisherman, being the produce of his personal labour.

A third opinion on this subject is, that as God has provided liberally for the wants of all his creatures, he has given leave to each to take what his necessities may require; and that by virtue of this grant a man may appropriate what he needs without asking or waiting for the consent of others. This opinion is just only in cases in which the things that I want are unappropriated. For, though the God of nature has provided an ample feast for all his children, I cannot sit down and eat, if it has been already appropriated before I come into the world, unless I can offer the possessors what they will consider as an equivalent.

Admitting that these opinions afforded a perfect solution of the question, "In what is the right of pro-

erty founded?" they would be of little use in vindicating our present claims of property in land, unless it were more probable than it is, that our estates were actually acquired at first in some of the ways which these accounts suppose; and that a regular regard had been paid to justice in every succeeding transmission of them since*.

Without any further analysis of this subject, we are prepared, by the different views that have been taken of it, to give our assent to the general position, that all right is founded on the will of God, and that this will, in relation to property, is in general expressed by the law of the land. If we have shewn that the intentions of God with regard to the fruits of the earth could not be fulfilled in any other way than by establishing the right of property, we have in reality shewn that it is his will that it should be established; and if we have succeeded in proving that the efforts and the feelings to which property gives rise are essentially connected with the progress of reason, and the happiness of mankind, there can be no doubt, that it is the will of God that this right should be universally recognised.

If these principles be just, it follows, that the right to an estate does not at all depend on the manner or justice of the original acquisition, nor upon the justice of each subsequent change of possession. The law of the land, which is the ordinance of God not less than the institution of property, must be regarded as in this case the rule of right.

* See Paley's Moral Philosophy.

CHAPTER XX.

INDIRECT MODES IN WHICH THE RIGHT OF PROPERTY IS VIOLATED : IDLENESS, AND PRODIGALITY.

THE command which gives to every one an exclusive right to that property which is his own, is violated in a variety of ways ; by indirect as well as by direct means.

We shall begin with the consideration of the indirect means of doing injustice to others in their property. Of these, idleness presents itself foremost to our contemplation. This does injury to the property of others, by preventing us from giving them their due ; and it does injury to ourselves and to the members of our family, by depriving them of the comfort and respectability which otherwise they would enjoy. " I went by the field of the slothful," says Solomon, " and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding, and lo ! it was all grown over with thorns ; and nettles had covered the face thereof ; and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw and considered it well. I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man."

In idleness there is a misimprovement of time, a waste of talents, and a neglect of the varied advantages which providence puts within our reach. If industry and labour be the source of wealth, do we

not inflict an injury on ourselves, on our families, and on all who have claims upon us, when we yield to indolence? Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger. Besides the inconveniences to which he subjects himself and his dependants in their scanty food and clothing, and uncomfortable lodging, he exposes himself to many temptations. Without supposing him to yield to the temptation of putting forth his hand to steal, he will be constantly liable to do so;—and being without any useful engagement, he will naturally associate with the seditious and the profligate. He might learn from the inferior animals the criminality of his conduct in neglecting the improvement of the trust committed to him. “Go to the ant thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.”

The evil of idleness, and the duty of industry, in the disciples of Christ, are clearly taught in the New Testament. “For, even when we were with you,” says the Apostle, addressing the Thessalonians, “this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now, them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.” The duty of making provision for ourselves and dependants, by an industrious prosecution of our calling, is repeatedly enforced by the same authority. “If any provide not for his own, and

especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." The good works and alms deeds, of which Dorcas was full, and the coats and the garments which she had made, are alluded to as proofs of that industry which was ornamental to her christian profession. Nor does any situation in life exempt us from the exercise of this habit: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." The habit of active and persevering industry will thus be formed, and will lead us, almost without effort, to derive our happiness from the improvement of our talents;—from the redemption of time;—from the usefulness of our lives;—and from the extent in which we are instrumental in accomplishing the beneficent designs of Providence, and in doing good to others. It will foster that spirit of honourable independence which is so conducive to our virtue and happiness, and which is so compatible with all the decorum and loveliness of christian humility.

Prodigality is another means of sinfully wasting property. It is somewhat difficult to define,—since it has a relation to the circumstances in which we are placed, and to our capability of spending, without encroaching on the rights of justice, and the duties of charity. Mere waste, without relation to circumstances, must be wrong in itself; though the criminality is doubtless aggravated when it is a direct dissipation of that to which our families are entitled to look for comfort and respectability, and our creditors for payment of their just claims.

A man may be termed prodigal when he is incon-

siderate and injudicious in the management of his affairs; when he parts with his property without a fair equivalent; and when he so profusely squanders what is his own that he soon will have recourse to what belongs to others. The feelings and habits in which this vice takes its rise, though different in different individuals, are such as ought not to be indulged. They are chiefly vanity and pride under various modifications, awakening the love of display, and the desire for expensive gratifications. The prodigal having entered on his career of folly, is stimulated in the pursuit by competitors alike foolish as himself, who are all eager to outstrip each other in show, in extravagance, in the idle and criminal consumption of property.

What are the consequences to which this vice leads, and in which it usually terminates? There is of course a rapid decline of property—a recourse to all the shifts and artifices which ingenuity can devise to elude creditors, and to keep up appearances; till at length, when the evil cannot be any longer postponed, ruin spreads itself around. This ruin is not confined to the prodigal himself; his family and immediate dependants share it with him. They are by his means precipitated from a station of comfort and respectability to a state of indigence and obscurity. After having defrauded tradesmen of their property, by withholding from them payment of their labour, or their goods,—after having borrowed without possessing the power, or perhaps the intention to pay,—after having injured, if not involved in deep calamity, all whom by deceit he had induced to support his extra-

vagance,—he is deserted by those who had profited by his criminality, excluded from the confidence of society, deprived of influence and usefulness, and doomed to suffer the bitter reflection, that he has been faithless to his stewardship, and has brought accumulated distresses on himself and on others.

In this situation, and even before he had reached it, how numerous are the temptations to which he is exposed! He has been long faithless to his engagements, just because his own conduct rendered it impossible for him to fulfil them. His promises which, at first, were broken with self-crimination have been so often violated, that they are of no value with others, while their breach scarcely gives pain to himself. He now has recourse to direct and deliberate falsehood,—to obtain by deceit and swindling what, but for himself, he might have obtained by the most honourable means. Detected, repulsed, despised,—under the influence of painful recollections, of mortified pride, and almost of despair, he has recourse to strong drink for relief from his distresses. The repetition of the stimulus strengthens the habit,—till at length the career is completed in frequent drunkenness, and perhaps terminated in self-destruction.

The guilt and misery of such a course are incalculable. If the person who runs it has been born to affluence, to power, and to be the instrument of putting the means of virtue and of happiness within the reach of thousands, how much has he lost in wasting, in prodigality and profligacy, the important talents with which Providence had intrusted him? Enjoying by

inheritance, perhaps, the name of a family that had weight over the land, and the possession of which placed him on vantage ground far above his fellows,—with a fortune adequate to sustain it in stimulating industry, in relieving distress, in patronising merit, and in diffusing blessings,—he has criminally thrown away his superior advantages, has destroyed the respectability with which the honours of many generations had surrounded him, and has subjected himself, in the state into which he has fallen, to many mortifications. In the ordinary ranks of life, the evils occasioned by continued prodigality are far greater than, without a minute examination, we are apt to be aware of. Besides those which terminate in the prodigal himself, he becomes the source of misery and disgrace to all who are connected with him. As the head of a family, he has brought want and wretchedness on his wife and children. After having long neglected their moral and religious interests, and lived before them without prayer and without God; after having allowed his offspring (if he has not directly encouraged them) to form notions and habits, from their observing his profuse expenditure, which are quite unsuited to their real circumstances;—they are awakened to the sad survey of calamities for which their previous training had but ill prepared them, and which the vices of a parent have heaped upon them. We could not fail of forming the most vivid impression of the odiousness of these vices, did we personally witness the poverty and distress which follow,—a mother whose heart has been already broken, sighing over miseries which she had partly foreseen, but

which she could not prevent,—children about to separate under circumstances far different from those which they had anticipated; and who, if they meet not with relief in the compassion of friends, are sent very helplessly to encounter the snares and temptations of the world.

CHAPTER XXI.

DIRECT METHODS OF INJURING THE PROPERTY OF OTHERS.

HAVING said so much on the indirect means by which property is injured, and the obligations of justice in this respect violated, I shall now proceed to the consideration of the direct methods by which, in this way, we transgress the law of God. These, though numerous, are reducible to two heads—Fraud and Gambling.

It is difficult to notice, in a short compass, the various ways in which, by fraudulent practices, we may injure the property of others. The chief of them may be included under the following particulars,—trespass,—taking the property of others by deceit and misrepresentation—receiving payment for services which have not been rendered—contracting debts without perceiving any means of paying them.

I. To trespass on the property of others is obviously a violation of the obligations of justice. We are chargeable with this offence when we walk through the enclosures, deface the buildings, abstract from

the property, of others. Delinquencies of this nature are often committed among the crowded population of a large city, sometimes thoughtlessly, but always blameably.

II. The taking the property of others by deceit and misrepresentation is better entitled to the denomination of fraud, and is a much more extensive system of robbery. It is to be regretted that in the transactions of commerce any thing like this should ever be found,—and that one of the most effectual means for advancing the civilization and happiness of man should be so often accompanied with the exercise of the basest passions of human nature.

The price of any thing, whether it be labour or the product of labour, is its marketable value; and in selling it we are entitled to ask an equivalent for it to the amount of this value, whatever it may be. But we cannot without injustice attempt to get more by misrepresentation and concealment. Should we impose, merely because the person we deal with is incapable of detecting and exposing the cheat that is practised on him, we so far forfeit the character of honesty by violating its fundamental principle. We add falsehood to fraud when we attempt to pass for sound what is deteriorated. This is a crime of a nature resembling that of which they are guilty who traffic in base coin. It is aiming by deceit to take property from others for which we give no fair and adequate equivalent. Nor is there a more aggravated species of this crime than that of knowingly using false weights and measures. I say *knowingly*, for it is possible that in some few cases this injustice

may be committed from inattention ; but in the great majority of cases it is done from design. Than this there is no sin more characteristic of a heart utterly hardened, as it so materially affects the comforts of those who have little more than the necessaries of life, and from whose little pittance it is the extreme of cruelty and inhumanity to abstract.

There is a fraud often practised in this country, immoral in its nature, tendency, and consequences, which many do not reprobate with the severity which it merits : I allude to smuggling. The delusion which lulls asleep the moral feelings of multitudes in regard to this evil is, that they consider it, in the particular instances which fall under their observation, a deduction from the national revenue too minute to claim attention ; not recollecting, that were the practice to become general, it would prove the destruction of one entire branch of public revenue ; a proportionable increase of the burden upon other branches ; and the ruin of all fair and open trade in the article smuggled. But this reasoning, conclusive as it is, and shewing it to be the imperious duty and interest of every honest man and good subject to suppress every species of illicit traffic, is not necessary to those who obey the authority of revelation. “ For this cause pay ye tribute also ; for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render, therefore, to all their dues : tribute to whom tribute is due ; custom to whom custom ; fear to whom fear ; honour to whom honour*.”

III. The receiving payment for services contracted

* Rom. ch. xiii. 7—9.

for, but which in reality are not rendered, is another species of fraud. The cases which come under this head are numerous,—extending to every breach of contract, whether implied or expressly made. When a person receives a commission from another, he in fact engages to bestow the same care, attention, and diligence on it, as if it were his own;—aware that it was on this condition he was intrusted with it. This holds true of the domestic servant who is made acquainted with the nature of the service expected from him, and which he, by undertaking it, promises to render. Should he intentionally fail, he receives wages which he has not earned, and is guilty of deliberate fraud.

The same remark is applicable to agents of every description,—to all who are in situations of trust,—to the advocate who engages to plead the cause of his client,—to the medical man who promises to give the full advantage of his skill to his patient,—to the teacher who undertakes to make his pupils acquainted with certain branches of knowledge,—and above all to the christian preacher and pastor, who is expected to be under the influence of the most elevated motives, and who binds himself by ties the most sacred to discharge faithfully the duties of his high vocation. These, and several other offices, cannot, from their very nature, and from the confidence which is reposed in the character and conduct of individual persons, be performed, in ordinary circumstances, by deputy. Who would intrust his business to an agent or an advocate, or his health to a physician, or his children to a teacher, or his property or reputation to the

arbitration of a judge, who employed others to perform those duties for which they receive remuneration? It was our estimation of their principles, talents, and integrity, that led us to select them; and it is only on the understanding that they give us the advantage of these endowments in their personal services, that we solicit the discharge of their respective offices, and pay them their reward. Should they in this respect fail in answering our expectations, they are chargeable with a breach of contract not less than if the stipulation had been previously committed to writing, and are guilty of the fraud of receiving payment for services which they have not rendered.

It is no answer to this to say, that if the services are really rendered, though it should be by deputy, no injury is done. Their employers gave them no discretionary power. They were engaged in consideration of their character—on the understanding that they would perform the duty intrusted to them personally, and to the best of their ability and judgment,—and they are, therefore, not at liberty to discharge it in any other way.

I am aware that a different doctrine is held in England, practically at least, regarding ministers of the gospel. Non-residence is there allowed them, and in certain cases sanctioned by law. The argument by which it is attempted to defend this practice is, that the officiating curate discharges every duty which his principal, were he present, would be bound to discharge, and in a manner equally beneficial to the parish. But this argument, even though it were valid to the extent alleged, could only be urged when

the principal is absent from ill health, or when rendering extraordinary service to the cause of religion; in all other cases it is palpably untenable.

I shall answer it in the words of Paley: "When a man draws upon this fund (the revenues of the church) whose studies and employments bear no relation to the object of it, and who is no further a minister of the christian religion than as a cockade makes a soldier, it seems a misapplication little better than a robbery. And to those who have the management of such matters I submit this question, whether the impoverishment of the fund, by converting the best share of it into annuities for the gay and illiterate youth of great families, threatens not to starve and stifle the little clerical merit that is left among us?"

But though in our church* non-residence is not permitted, may it not be feared that there are ministers within its pale who receive remuneration for services which are carelessly and stintedly performed? Even on the principles of justice, by which they are bound to render the stipulated equivalent for what they receive, are they found guilty. May the number who are influenced to a zealous discharge of the arduous duties of their holy vocation by purer and higher motives than worldly considerations, be greatly increased! May we all act more in the spirit of the exhortation; "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

* The Church of Scotland.

And when the chief shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away*.”

IV. Another species of fraud is the contracting of debts without perceiving any means of paying them. The christian rule of duty on this head is, “Owe no man any thing.” But multitudes, in neglect or in violation of this rule, involve themselves in debts, without duly considering whether they shall possess at any future period the means of discharging them; and thus take from others that property for which they may never have it in their power to render an equivalent. It is no sufficient answer to this, that from the nature of the commercial speculations in which many are engaged, it is impossible for them to be fully acquainted with their own circumstances. For that man is evidently chargeable with dishonesty who buys from another, and becomes his debtor, without such grounds as would satisfy any upright and reasonable person, that he has the means and the prospect of being able to pay. Without such a conviction founded upon good grounds, to contract debts is nothing less than to defraud. That the case supposed admits of various degrees of aggravation is conceded; but in all its varieties it is directly opposed to integrity and justice.

I shall say nothing here of the crime of withholding a part of our property from our creditors, and of attempting to discharge our debts with a sum far less than their value; because such conduct is palpably and grossly iniquitous and unjust.

I shall merely add, that if we consult the quiet

* 1 Peter ch. v. 2—4.

of our own minds, the credit of the christian profession, our interest and usefulness in the world, we shall study to owe no man any thing.

CHAPTER XXII.

GAMBLING.

GAMBLING is the other direct method by which we injure the property of others. This cherishes, and calls into exercise, the desire to acquire what others possess, and thus leads to the violation of the law of God. There are but two possible methods, as it has been remarked, by which we can acquire property from others honestly ;—either by free gift ; or by rendering an equivalent for what we receive. In gambling it is obtained in neither of these ways. The gambler may lay his account with *losing* a certain sum, but not with freely giving it away ; and the only equivalent which he obtains is the chance, as it is called, of depriving another, contrary to his intention, of a part of his property.

There is sometimes an attempt made to defend this practice on the score of amusement. It is besides, alleged, that every man's property is his own, and that if he chooses to gratify himself, by hazarding it in whole or in part, he has a right to do so. The thief, the swindler, the robber take the money of others without their consent ; whereas, the gambler wins it with the consent of the owner.

To this it may be replied, that no amusement is

lawful which is immoral in its nature and tendency. Every man doubtless has an exclusive right to the use of his property ; but every man also is a steward, and is accountable to the Lord and Proprietor of all for the way in which he employs it. As it is manifestly the design of God that the gifts which he bestows should be expended in useful and beneficent purposes,—in diffusing happiness,—and in accomplishing the greatest good of which, from the means we possess, we are capable ;—we are not at liberty to appropriate them to other ends, or foolishly to waste them. Good men may sometimes be mistaken, and lose property in the pursuit of ends which they deem useful or beneficent, but which afterwards appear to have occasioned an idle and profitless waste ;—but they cannot deliberately dispose of it for unworthy purposes, and far less for encouraging vice. It is, indeed, charity in many cases to give alms to the guilty,—to those who have reduced themselves to wretchedness by their crimes ;—but who would ever lay his account with losing his money, from the desire that the professed gambler might obtain it as charity? The professed gambler is a man who associates with the avowed enemies of religion,—who harbours in his bosom the very basest passions of human nature,—and is generally, if not always, a gross and continued sensualist. Who that has any just sense of the account he must render of the use of all that providence intrusts to his charge, would willingly place any part of his property at the disposal of such a character as this?

Besides, it is not true, as is alleged, that the gam-

bler takes the property of another with the consent of the owner. In every case, at least, when property of any serious amount is at stake, each party in the game designs to win from his antagonist, and not to lose his own. Nor would he hazard his own at all, but that it is necessary for him to do so, in order to get possession of that which is not his. To engage in the game with the certain knowledge of losing is conduct with which no sane man is, or can be chargeable. The money lost, therefore, is lost contrary to the wish, the design, and consequently to the consent of the persons losing; while the winner holds it by no better tenure, according to the laws of morality, than the thief or the robber.

The gambler, therefore, is guilty of a direct violation of the law of God, in plundering the property of others, and reducing them to poverty and wretchedness; and proves himself by such conduct to be void of piety, benevolence, or humanity. He is a source of evil by his example, as well as by his actions; a corrupter of youth, stealing from them not their property only, but what is infinitely more valuable, their virtue and their happiness; and doing all in his power to prevent their retreat from the road that inevitably leads to present and eternal ruin.

Gambling—to what extent of criminality and misery does it not lead its votaries? It opens up a way into the hearts of those who come fully within its influence to the fiends of hell to take up their abode, and hurry them along to crimes of darker and still darker hue,—to robbery and murder,—till at length the earthly course of guilt is often terminated by suicide, and the libe-

rated spirit, utterly depraved, becomes the eternal associate of spirits as wretched and hopeless in depravity as itself. How much would be gained to the high interests of man were this source of moral waste and destruction, which has turned many a youth originally generous into an unfeeling seducer, a cruel and relentless oppressor, a fraudulent member of society, a remorseless assassin, a self-tormented and miserable suicide—entirely removed from our land, and still more severely denounced by the strongest prohibitions and penalties of law?

Here, I would venture to make a remark in regard to all games of chance. The evil of card and dice playing, and similar amusements, does not fully commence till money is staked. Then, however small may be the sum, it is gambling, and is generally productive of the evil passions to which gambling gives rise. The religious community, partly from the conviction of its being a profitless waste of time, and partly, from a well founded dread of the habits it may engender, especially in the young, and the consequences to which such habits may gradually lead, very wisely disallow in their families all such amusements. For similar reasons, as well as for others derived from considerations of humanity, and of their responsibility to God for the disposal of their time and talents, they disapprove of horse-racing, bull-baiting, prize-fights, and all such sources of attraction to the idle, the dissipated, and the fraudulent. To those who have the wish to maintain consistently this religious character, would I say in the language of the Apostle, “ Be not ye partakers

with them. For ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord ; walk as the children of light ; proving what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."

I. The importance of forming industrious and economical habits. Such habits are closely allied to our virtue, usefulness, respectability and happiness. Among whom is that Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation chiefly successful in making its deep and saving impression? It is not among the idle and the profligate, who seldom give it any attention, and remain at a distance from its spirit and its comfort. It has been remarked by an eminent writer, that of all the thoroughly idle men he has ever known, only one appeared to have been converted ; and from the era of his conversion he became industrious and diligent.

Hence the duty of parents to train up their children to habits of industry and of economy. Should they succeed in their endeavours to form such habits in the little ones whom God has intrusted to their care, they will leave them, though they should be unable to give them any thing else, a valuable inheritance. Let young persons improve the morning of their days, by forming the habit of doing diligently and with their might, whatever they engage in ; and of deriving their happiness, not from competing with fools, and in running with them the career of folly, but in the favour of God, in the approbation of conscience, in the active exertion of their faculties, and in punctual

attention to useful employment. This habit will prove as serviceable in their spiritual as in their worldly concerns ; and they will thus be most likely to advance to true honour here, and to the enjoyment of glory and happiness hereafter.

2. From the observations now made we learn the extent of true morality. The christian moralist who often inculcates the duties of religion—who gives to the law of God its right interpretation, by pointing out its infinite purity, spirituality, and unalterable authority, is objected to by two classes ;—by the Antinomians who turn the grace of God unto licentiousness ; and by those who rely on certain good works as the ground of acquittal and of acceptance before God.

But the first of these classes object to the frequent inculcation of duty, because the duty does not suit their habits, their hearts, and their lives ;—because they are in reality strangers to the spirit and the power of that Gospel to which they profess to give the preference, but which has been ushered into our world, not to destroy the law but to fulfil ;—and because they are destitute of the principle of love to God and man, on which every enactment of the law is founded. The second of these classes, those who rely on certain good works for acceptance with their Maker, object to the christian teacher, on the opposite ground, that he dwells too much on the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel. But when he expounds the law, and shews how essentially different it is from the heartless, varying, hypocritical morality of the world, he is not

less than before the object of censure. He is now accused of being too strict—of being righteous over-much,—of condemning innocent amusements—of teaching a morose system of morality.

CHAPTER XXIII.

ON TRUTH AND VERACITY.

SUCH is the importance of truth to the order, the virtue, and the happiness of the universe, that one of the precepts of the decalogue is a prohibition of its violation. “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.” Truth signifies an accordance with the real state of things, whether in the natural or moral world. It very frequently, as in the ninth commandment, denotes veracity in speaking the truth; and also fidelity in the fulfilment of our promises and contracts.

The great importance of truth to us, or, of our being acquainted with the real state of things in the natural, but more especially in the moral world, is sufficiently obvious. Some knowledge of the laws of the natural world is essential to the existence of the human race; and the collective experience of mankind, in this respect, is an invaluable treasure bequeathed to every succeeding generation.

But truth in the moral world, that is, our knowing God as he is, in his nature, character, and perfections,—and the relations which we bear to him and to each other,—our knowing the actual procedure of his

moral government, in as far as that immediately relates to our holiness and happiness, is so necessary, that there can be no foundation of virtue and no true obedience without it. It is this only that forms the means of sanctification, of comfort, and of hope, that enriches, purifies, and saves mankind; and in proportion as the glory of God, and the salvation and progressive improvement of immortal beings, are valuable, is the real worth of moral and religious truth. It is on this ground that they only are blessed who know the joyful sound; that the Saviour prays, "sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth*."

Truth, then, is essentially necessary, in the first place, to the mutual confidence of intelligent beings. It is only in proportion as we can rely on the veracity of others that we can place trust in them. It is because there cannot be a suspicion entertained concerning the truth of God, that is, concerning his veracity, that he is the object of confidence to all the ends of the earth. Could a doubt be admitted as to the truth of his testimony, of his promises, and of his laws, his requisitions might, from fear of punishment, be complied with, but they could not from love be obeyed. It is truth that surrounds his government with glory and majesty, and that renders his character the subject of delightful contemplation and confidence. It is because he is a God of truth, and without iniquity, that he is the rock, the foundation of trust to the universe, and that all his ways are judgment.

Truth is requisite, in the second place, to the virtue or holiness of intelligent beings. It is at once the

* John xvii. 17.

evidence of their holiness, and the means of its production. A being without truth, is a being without virtue and respectability ; corrupt in himself, and a source of corruption to all around him. It is by truth only, moral and religious, that man is enlightened, purified, and prepared for a nobler existence. It is because the law of the Lord has this character of perfection, that it has efficacy to convert the soul. It is in consequence of his word being the truth, that it forms an infallible directory to our faith and conduct, and leads to the practice of all righteousness.

Truth, in the third place, is necessary to the happiness of all intelligent creatures. The pleasures which arise from its discovery are pure and endless. There are pleasures of imagination, doubtless, because he who has formed us has, in infinite goodness and wisdom, multiplied the sources of our enjoyment ; but even such pleasures, without material detriment to our virtue and happiness, must not spring from falsehood, though they may proceed from fiction. That enjoyment only is lasting which issues from the knowledge of truth, and especially of that truth which relates to the character and government of God, to the mediation of the Redeemer, to the salvation of man, and to the immortality of glory and blessedness which the Gospel reveals. Such glorious themes, so immediately allied to all that concerns us as sentient and accountable creatures, must deeply interest, purify, and convey never-failing gladness to the heart.

Hence the importance of veracity. It is by communication chiefly that we come to the knowledge of

truth. It is very much by the experience and information of others that our faculties are developed and improved ; that we are capable in any measure of interpreting the works of nature and providence ; that we know any thing of Him that made us ; and of our own origin, duties, and destiny. How dependent are mankind on each other's veracity, in regard to their daily transactions ; their food, clothing, and medicine ; their education and instruction ; their tranquillity and happiness ; and their success and usefulness ! Than this no disposition, no duty, can be of greater importance to man in the various stages of his existence, as a sentient, intellectual, moral and religious being ; and no crime can be greater in magnitude, or more ruinous in its consequences, than its violation. The enemy of all good, the head of apostate angels, is characterized as the violator of truth, a liar and the father of lies. Take away veracity from the universe, and you annihilate love, friendship, virtue, and happiness ; and with millions of beings, the whole creation becomes an insupportable solitude.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ON THE NATURE AND OBLIGATION OF A PROMISE.

It has been truly remarked, that “ it is a prerogative of man, that he can communicate his knowledge of facts by testimony, and enter into engagements by promise or contract. God has given him these powers by a part of his constitution, which distin-

guishes him from all brute animals. And whether they are original powers, or resolvable into other original powers, it is evident that they spring up in the human mind at an early period of life, and are found in every individual of the species, whether savage or civilized.

“ For we see that children, as soon as they are capable of understanding declarations and promises, are led by their constitution to rely upon them. They are no less led by their constitution to veracity and candour on their own part. Nor do they ever deviate from this road of truth and sincerity, until corrupted by bad example and company. This disposition to sincerity in themselves, and to give credit to others, whether we call it instinct, or whatever name we give it, must be considered as the effect of their constitution*.” The question, whether the disposition to speak truth, and to give credit to the declarations of others, be an original principle in the human mind, or, merely the effect of association and experience, I do not consider of such importance as to merit a particular consideration.

No obligation can be stronger than that which attaches to the fulfilment of a declaration or promise ; and the man who feels not its force, irrespective of the effect which a character for fidelity, or the opposite, will have on his rank in human estimation, is already deeply depraved. We are led by the constitution of our nature to prefer truth to falsehood, and sincerity to deceit ; nor is it till some evil affection is awakened and some pernicious example followed, that this

* Reid's Works, v. iii. p. 546.

order is inverted, and that the path of open veracity and honesty is relinquished. At a more mature period of life, in addition to the testimony of conscience concerning the obligations of truth and fidelity, we have powerful motives to a sacred observance of them, arising from views of utility. The authority of God on this subject is decisive: "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle, who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart." "Without are murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death*." "When an individual, by an engagement, has transferred to his neighbour one of the gifts which God had bestowed upon him, the latter has the same right to it which the original proprietor had before the transfer; and if it be withheld from him he has the same right to use force for the recovery of it as for the recovery of any other article of his property."

Moralists and casuists have thought it necessary to ascertain the sense in which promises are to be interpreted. This appears to me to be a superfluous task, since it is not more manifest that a promise is obligatory, than that it is obligatory in the sense in which the promiser knew, at the time, the promisee received it. The expectation excited by the promise is nothing more than the promiser was aware of; and to this extent he is clearly bound to fulfil his word. He has knowingly and voluntarily conveyed

* Rev. xxii. 15. xxi. 8.

to another person a right to its performance, which he cannot violate without injustice.

“ Temures,” says Paley, in illustration of this position, “ promised the garrison of Sebastia, that if they would surrender, *no blood should be shed*. The garrison surrendered ; and Temures buried them all alive. Now Temures fulfilled the promise in one sense, and in the sense too in which he intended it at the time ; but not in the sense in which the garrison of Sebastia actually received it, nor in the sense in which Temures himself knew that the garrison received it ; which last sense was the sense in which he was in conscience bound to have performed it*.”

If we knowingly and voluntarily by signs merely, not less than by language, awaken expectation in another, that is, if our conduct towards any person be such as designedly on our part to produce a natural expectation on his, we are as much bound by the laws of morality to fulfil this expectation, as if it had been excited by a promise in words. It becomes all, therefore, as they value their own peace and respectability of character, and more especially does it become those of a warm temperament, an ardent and generous disposition of mind, to deliberate, to weigh well the import of their words, before making a promise, lest they be led by surprise, or goodnature, or importunity, to encourage expectations which, without doing injustice to themselves, or to their families, or to the interests of the community, they may not be able to fulfil. When, from whatever cause, such promises are made, we find ourselves placed in trying circum-

* Moral Phil. v. i. p. 127.

stances,—trying to our virtue and happiness ; and though the result may not impair our integrity, it may greatly affect the estimation in which we are held, and consequently our power of doing good.

Another question of which moralists and casuists have thought it requisite to attempt a solution is, In what cases are promises not binding ? To this it may briefly be replied, that man is morally bound to fulfil his engagements, whether the person to whom the promise was made, or with whom the contract was entered into, has any power to enforce the fulfilment. He can only be released from his obligation by a physical incapability of performing, or by the previous unlawfulness of the stipulation into which he has entered. He may and he ought to feel the sinfulness of having promised, or engaged to perform, what by no exertions on his part he can possibly accomplish ; but he can have no ground for moral disapprobation for not doing that which to him is impossible. If he was aware of this impossibility at the time that he made the engagement, he is very criminal, inasmuch as he has fraudulently awakened expectations, knowing that it was beyond his power to gratify them.

If it be immoral in us to perform a certain action, it cannot be lawful for us to do it ; and consequently, we are not bound to do it, merely because we have entered into an engagement to that effect. We may, and it is very proper that we should suffer from remorse, for having promised or contracted to do what was in itself sinful in us in any circumstances to perform ; but we can feel none in consequence of our non-performance. We have just cause to regret our

error ; but to fulfil our engagement could only furnish an additional ground of self-condemnation. The criminality of such promises and engagements lies in making them ; the sincerity of our repentance is proved by breaking them.

A memorable example of an unlawful promise and oath we have in the case of Herod. He promised to his daughter-in-law, “ that he would give her whatsoever she asked, even to the half of his kingdom.” There was nothing exceptionable in the terms in which Herod made this promise. It is presumed that he had a right to give away the half of his kingdom. But he could have none to take away the lives of innocent human beings. So far, therefore, from being bound by his oath to comply with the unlawful demand of Herodias, he was laid under the strongest moral obligation, for the reasons already assigned, to resist and refuse it.

It may be proper here to remark, that a promise or engagement may be highly criminal, from the time and manner in which it was made, and the dispositions in which it originated, and yet it may be unlawful to break it. Cases of this nature, it is presumed, are of rare occurrence ; but as the question involved in it was thought to be of sufficient importance to merit a dissertation from a most distinguished casuist of a former age, it is meet that I should allude to it.

“ A certain person, in the lifetime of his wife, who was then sick, had paid his addresses, and promised marriage, to another woman ;—the wife died ; and the woman demanded performance of the promise. The man, who, it seems, had changed his mind,

either felt or pretended doubts concerning the obligation of such a promise, and referred his case to Bishop Sanderson, the most eminent in this kind of knowledge of his time. Bishop Sanderson, after writing a dissertation on the question, adjudged the promise to be void. In which, however, upon our principles, he was wrong; for however criminal the affection might be, which induced the promise, the performance, when it was demanded, was lawful*.”

Are extorted promises binding? They are so in every case in which the thing promised is lawful,—that is, when the promise is of that nature that it may be performed without infringing on my duty to God, to my neighbour, or to myself. If the extorted promise refers to what is in itself unlawful, of course it ought not to be performed.

CHAPTER XXV.

ON THE DUTIES OF CONTRACT WHICH RELATE TO COMMERCIAL BARTER.

A CONTRACT differs from a promise, in its being the mutual and voluntary engagement of two parties, in which each comes under an obligation to the other, and each reciprocally acquires a right to what is promised by the other.

The observations made in the former chapter, as to the sense in which a promise is to be interpreted, and the cases in which promises are not binding, will

* Paley's Mor. Phil. v. i. p. 135.

be found generally applicable to contract. We are also to recall to our recollection what has been already advanced concerning the importance of veracity and fidelity to the virtue, industry, and happiness of mankind.

If that provision, by which human beings are enabled to barter what they do not want for a commodity which they require, be infinitely important to the comfort and moral improvement of the race, then is every act of infidelity in regard to commercial bargains a direct attack on the industry, civilization, and happiness of man. The individual guilty of it, not only sins against God, by violating an explicit commandment, but does what in him lies to frustrate the ends of his government, by weakening the support of public confidence, and reducing human society to a state of anarchy, idleness, and misery.

He, therefore, who does not honestly use his best exertions to fulfil the engagements he has entered into, is deserving of punishment. From the difficulty of distinguishing between mere misfortune and fraudulent insolvency, it sometimes happens that the innocent may suffer the disgrace due to the guilty. But this is an evil for which perhaps in this world there is no remedy. If infidelity to commercial engagements be a crime which very deeply affects the most valuable interests of mankind, it is right that, like other crimes against human society, it should be punished ; though the general infliction of punishment on this class of delinquents may in some very rare instances fall on individuals who ought to escape. The great facility with which a dishonest man may in

this way defraud others of their property, and by which he may irrecoverably alienate it, forms an additional reason why a severe punishment should be affixed to the crime.

“ Any alteration in the laws, which could distinguish the degrees of guilt, or convert the services of the insolvent debtor to some public profit, might be an improvement; but any considerable mitigation of their rigour, under colour of relieving the poor, would increase their hardships. For whatever deprives the creditor of his power of coercion, deprives him of his security; and as this must add greatly to the difficulty of obtaining credit, the poor, especially the lower sort of tradesmen, are the first who would suffer by such a regulation. An advocate, therefore, for the interests of this important class of the community, will deem it more eligible, that one out of a thousand should be sent to gaol by his creditors, than that the nine hundred and ninety-nine should be straitened and embarrassed, and many of them lie idle by the want of credit.”

CHAPTER XXVI.

CONTRACT RELATING TO PERSONAL SERVICE.

THERE is a species of contract which deserves a separate and particular notice, on account of the associations to which it gives rise, and the duties involved in it,—I mean that which relates to personal service. In the land of free men all service is of course performed

by voluntary contract. There is a bartering of time, and liberty, and stipulated labour, for maintenance and a pecuniary recompense. The master and servant become morally bound to discharge to each other the peculiar offices which they engaged to perform.

While in every case the master is bound to treat his servants with justice and humanity, their treatment as to diet, accommodation, the quantity of work required, and general indulgence, must be regulated, somewhat at least, by custom. This much is implied in the contract by which the one has become bound to the other. But on no account are they at liberty to allow immorality and irreligion among their servants. On the contrary, it is their duty to use the power which is intrusted to them for the moral and religious improvement of those whom Providence has placed so near them, and on whose fidelity their comfort so greatly depends. Will they not view with esteem and moral regard persons who may have rendered them more than they stipulated for,—who have given them, not merely a faithful, but an affectionate service,—who have wept for their distresses, watched them in sickness, and rejoiced in their prosperity? All this may reasonably be expected from them in consequence of the operation of natural affection, and a reverential obedience to the law of God; who assures them that all, whatever be the rank which they hold in society, stand in the same relation to him, and that the offices which they are required in their various spheres to perform, are to be regarded as done to him. “ Servants, be obedient to them which are your

masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling; in singleness of your heart as unto Christ; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free *."

But if this affectionate and dutiful conduct may reasonably be expected from our domestics, though not expressed in the contract, there are duties also devolving on masters which are not discharged when they have given the diet, lodging, and pecuniary recompense for which they stipulated. These, it may not be very easy to define; nor is it necessary to those who bear in mind the great christian rule of duty, and who make it their study to act upon it. "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." They are like us, rational and accountable creatures, who stand in the same common relation with ourselves to the Creator and moral governor of the universe, who are susceptible of the pleasures and pains of humanity, and who, after this fleeting life has passed away, are to begin an immortal existence.

We owe them, then, as much indulgence as is compatible with their virtue, and our reasonable expectation of service from them;—forgiveness of their imperfections, remembering our own frailty and liability to err;—encouragement when it is obviously their aim to please us;—but above all, we owe them

* Eph. vi. 5—9.

moral and religious instruction, and such an example as will cherish and not check their virtues. "He who, after living under the same roof with us for years, quits our door without the amiable qualities with which he first entered it,—every pure wish polluted, and new habits of licentiousness formed, while all that remains of early habits is a little remorse, that is soon overwhelmed in the turbulence of vulgar dissipation,—quits us poorer, and as a mere human being, far lower in the scale of dignity, than when, with all his clownish awkwardness, he had virtues which it has been our misfortune, or rather our guilt, to destroy*."

CHAPTER XXVII.

ON FALSEHOOD.

In proportion to the importance of truth to the confidence, virtue, and happiness of intelligent beings, is the criminality of lying, or of falsehood.

A lie is a wilful violation of the truth, or a false declaration of facts voluntarily made. Of course, he incurs the guilt of falsehood, who, in his statement, intends to deceive, though in the end his declaration may be found accordant with truth; on the other hand, he must be considered innocent, who, after impartial examination, states what he believes to be true, though his statement should turn out to be without foundation.

* For a fuller view of the Duties of Masters and Servants, see *Personal and Family Religion*, chap. iii.

We are guilty of falsehood when we rashly declare what is not true ; though our ignorance of its falsehood arises from sinful inattention. We ought to have had a deeper impression of the importance of truth, and we should have given the subject a more full investigation before we had ventured to affirm any thing respecting it. Our erroneous averments may, in their consequences, be as injurious as deliberate falsehoods.

We are also chargeable with lying when, with an intention to deceive, we profess to give the whole truth, but at the same time conceal a part of it. That we are influenced by the spirit, and incur the guilt of falsehood, in this case, when the party to whom the communication is made has a right to know the whole truth, will not be doubted. Or, even though the person to whom the declaration is made should have no moral or legal right to know the whole truth, if we profess to give the whole, we, by our profession, bind ourselves to act accordingly.

Should we, in our declarations or narratives, intentionally misrepresent, or, though our misrepresentation should be merely the effect of a biassed and partial examination of the facts, we are justly chargeable with falsehood. Controversialists and historians are, in this way, blameable, when, to serve a purpose, they give such a view of facts, and decorated with such embellishments, as must necessarily convey an erroneous impression to the mind of the reader. The criminality incurred by such conduct, appears to me to be of a nature more aggravated than that of common lying, both because the persons to whom it relates are

well educated, and because the consequences of their misrepresentation are generally more permanently injurious to the virtue and happiness of mankind.

Finally, the breach of a promise or engagement is obviously a lie. It is affirmed by a popular moralist, on good grounds, that every lie is a breach of promise; for whoever seriously addresses his discourse to another, tacitly promises to speak the truth, because he knows that the truth is expected. To make a promise, intending not to fulfil it, is a falsehood of a complicated and aggravated nature; and under the solemnity of an oath, indicates the deepest depravity.

I do not think it necessary here particularly to notice what have been called *pious frauds*, or the doing of evil to produce good, more especially to subserve the cause of religion. Admitting that the doing of good is the *real* motive of the persons who think themselves at liberty on this ground to deviate from moral rules, an Apostle declares that they are liable to just and awful condemnation. Who has given them a dispensation to depart from the eternal laws of right and wrong? Even granting that the excellency of the end in view could palliate the sin of this departure, are they quite certain that their motive in accomplishing the action is unexceptionable? Is it not possible, is it not probable, wherever there is a wish to do evil, even though the professed design should be to glorify God, that the wish has originated in an evil bias of the heart? But supposing the good which is realized to be equal to that which expectation anticipated,—and supposing that this good is productive of extensive happiness to mankind, will this circumstance do

away with the sin of direct disobedience to God? Is it for creatures shortsighted and dependent as we are, to venture on the violation of his laws, from the presumptuous hope of producing greater good by their violation than by their observance? In every case the transgression of his law is sin, and the wages of sin is death.

Are there any falsehoods which are not lies, that is, which are not criminal? Mr. Paley answers this question in the affirmative.

I. “Where no one is deceived; which is the case in parables, fables, novels, jests, tales to create mirth, ludicrous embellishments of a story, where the declared design of the speaker is not to inform, but to divert; compliments in the subscription of a letter, a servant’s denying his master, a prisoner’s pleading ‘not guilty,’ an advocate asserting the justice, or his belief of the justice, of his client’s cause. In such instances, no confidence is destroyed, because none was reposed; no promise to speak the truth is violated, because none was given, or understood to be given.”

Of the greater number of cases here specified, I would say, that there is no falsehood either implied or expressed; that they are objects of imagination merely, and not of belief; and that when they cease to hold this position, and are addressed to the intellect as realities, they are no longer innocent.

A servant’s denying his master ought not to be coupled with a prisoner’s pleading ‘not guilty,’ or an advocate’s asserting the justice of his client’s cause; because the former cannot by any rule of christian morality be justified, were it for nothing else than the

corrupting tendency of the practice in question : while the latter cases may be vindicated on the ground that no man is obliged to criminate himself, and that the known signification of his pleading 'not guilty,' is, that he does not *acknowledge* himself to be guilty. Every man under the imputation of crime, whether innocent or guilty, has a right, in this country, to insist upon being tried according to law : in pleading 'not guilty,' he simply demands this right ; and his innocence is to be presumed until the contrary is proved by legal evidence.

However difficult it may be, in some cases, for a conscientious advocate to discharge his professional duties without impairing his moral feelings, or departing, in any degree, from the laws of morality, the difficulty is not insuperable. If every man be entitled to the advantage of law, and if no man ought to be condemned but by legal evidence, he discharges a most important duty,—important in regard to our lives and liberties,—who employs his talent and acquirements in obtaining *legal* justice for his client. He may present his case in the most favourable light of which it is capable, without any violation of truth.

II. Mr. Paley also affirms, that " falsehoods are not lies, that is, are not criminal, where the person to whom you speak has no right to know the truth ; or, more properly, when little or no inconvenience results from the want of confidence."

But has not every man to whom we profess to communicate the truth, a right to know it? We tacitly promise to speak the truth to every person whom we seriously address ; and thus we give him a right to

know it, in so far as we profess, or lead him to believe, that we mean to impart to him the desired information. We are, therefore, not at liberty, consistently with justice, to use any stratagems to deceive an enemy, which are opposed to any promise of sincerity, either expressed or implied.

The other form in which this rule is presented is, if possible, still more objectionable : it is founded on the principle of expediency ; and allows, or rather authorizes us, to utter falsehoods as often as we can induce ourselves to believe that little inconvenience will result from the want of confidence. Can we conceive any maxim more antisciptural, or more immoral in its tendency ? It is substituting as the rule of moral conduct, in room of the will of God, our own limited and partial views of the consequences of actions. Will not human beings, in applying this rule, think as much of the convenience which the falsehood will yield to themselves, as of the inconvenience which will result to others ? Will not the disadvantage to others diminish in their estimation in proportion to the magnitude of the advantage which the uttering of the falsehood will bring to themselves ?

“ But when a man has once accustomed himself,” as Dr. Dwight remarks, “ to utter falsehood so long as to render the practice familiar, all that apprehensiveness of guilt, that ready susceptibility of alarm at the appearance of criminality, which constitutes the chief safety of man in the moment of temptation, will be extinguished. The mind will be no longer agitated at the thought of sin, nor awake to the sense of danger. He, who has uttered the first falsehood under the

influence of ten degrees of temptation, will as readily utter the second under the influence of eight ; the third of six ; the fourth of four ; the fifth of two ; and the sixth without any temptation at all. The obliquity of his judgment will now prevent him from discerning, that others suffer any inconvenience from his conduct. In this manner, any man living may easily become, in a short time, a confirmed liar."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE EVIL OF FALSEHOOD.

PERHAPS lying, when it has become a habit, may be traced, in almost every instance, to an error of education, arising from the carelessness, or the bad example, of parents and guardians. How often do they who have the charge of young children, deceive them by making promises to them which they never mean seriously to perform, and by uttering, and that daily, direct falsehoods, with the view of persuading them, to do what is disagreeable to them ! Is it necessary that they should take medicine : however bitter and unpalatable, it is declared to be sweet and pleasant. Is it wished that they should conduct themselves with quietness and propriety before strangers : rewards are promised them which are never bestowed. And thus, from their infancy, are they accustomed to deceit and falsehood in those whom they love and revere. Is it to be wondered at, that, in the sequel of their lives, they

should imitate an example by which they have been taught to think lightly of the evil of falsehood?

What they are thus taught by example, they are often tempted to do by fear of punishment. There are parents who never correct their children but in anger, whose punitive discipline is conducted in fury, and who think that they discharge their duty when they have visited every delinquency with a severe infliction. To escape this chastisement, which is so indiscreetly administered, a lie is told; another crime is committed; and, for the same reason, the falsehood is repeated; till by the repetition of the act, the habit is fully formed; and the child, in all probability, advances into life without truth, and without principle.

The temptations to the violation of truth are numerous,—as numerous as are the temptations to dishonesty and fraud. But, perhaps, there is not a more fertile source of falsehood than party spirit and contention. How contrary this spirit is to that charity which “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but which rejoiceth in the truth,” is shewn by the misrepresentation and calumny which are so eagerly propagated by opposing parties, in their contention for victory. How carefully, then, should we guard against that state of mind which incapacitates us for judging with fairness and candour of the conduct of others, and which might incline us to take pleasure in circulating reports to their disadvantage!

It has already been noticed, that in proportion as truth is of importance to the confidence, virtue, and happiness of mankind, is falsehood criminal and in-

jurious. But in viewing it aright, we must regard it as evil in itself, as a sin against God, as opposed to the infinite purity and rectitude of his nature, as a dishonour to his perfections and character, and absolutely, and in all its forms, forbidden by Him. The Scriptures do not furnish the slightest indulgence to the practice, whatever be the plea urged in its justification. On the contrary, they declare, that whosoever loveth and maketh a lie, "shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of God;" and that "he who will save his life" by the violation of truth, "shall lose it;" and that "he who shall lose his life" for the sake of his adherence to truth, "shall find it."

The natural and necessary consequences of falsehood are, indeed, such as shew the magnitude of this crime as a source of mischief and of misery. It is the parent of numerous vices; the chief instrument by which plausible but unprincipled men subvert the liberties of nations; and the means by which oppressors and tyrants rule over an enslaved people. In reviewing the history of the world, we cannot but remark, that falsehood has been more widely ruinous to the interests of mankind than war or pestilence—that it is the principal obstacle against which the lovers of their country have had to contend, and by which they have often been deceived, and their benevolent designs frustrated;—that by its aid, the anti-christian power gradually arose, and at length established its dominion over Christendom;—and that it constitutes the greatest impediment over the world, in the various forms which it has assumed, to the progress and universal diffusion of divine truth.

How ruinous this crime is to the temporal and spiritual interests of individuals, it is unnecessary to say. Who is there who is not very much dependent for his well-being on the information which he receives from others ;—on the veracity of his agent, in whatever way he employs him ;—on the character which is given of the servants by those on whose attestation he has received them into his family ;—on the truth of those recommendations on the weight of which he intrusts his health and life to a physician ;—the instruction of his children to a tutor ;—and the comfort and edification of himself and his family to a minister of religion ? Is he deceived in these respects by a false friend or neighbour ? how great is the mischief which he experiences from falsehood !

In order fully to trace the consequences of lying, we must view them as they affect the highest interest of men, for time and eternity. It is by this means that evil spirits effect their designs, hostile to the virtue and happiness of mankind. When the mind is filled with fascinating error, truth is refused an entrance. If by truth alone the soul is sanctified and saved, how melancholy is the thought, that its exclusion is accompanied with guilt, and followed with irretrievable misery ! “ If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost : in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.”

It is unnecessary to point out, at any length, the effects of falsehood on the temporal and eternal interests of the individual who practises it. It is not

till he has become thoroughly hardened and unprincipled, that he is freed from the painful remonstrances of his own conscience ;—from a sense of the degrading condition into which, by the unanimous voice of mankind, he is consigned. If he has not yet proceeded thus far, and is not known and shunned as a liar, he is, at least, suffering from the fear of detection; and it is likely that he may conceive it necessary, in order to shield him from exposure, to tell many other falsehoods. The farther he advances, the more he finds himself involved in deceit; the probability is, that he will continue in his course till his iniquity is brought to light, till he has lost all credit and reputation; and it is well if he does not still persevere in the path of destruction, and become one of those who shall hereafter arise to shame and everlasting contempt.

CHAPTER XXIX.

ON SLANDER.

THE next species of falsehood is slander; or that conduct by which it is unjustly attempted to lessen and ruin the reputation of others.

In the race of human life, it often happens that our passions and our apparent interests would lead us to detract from the moral and intellectual merits of a rival; and even when we are restrained by principle and conscience from the arts of defamation, there may be a secret satisfaction felt in seeing him lowered in public estimation. There is no situation in which we

are free from this temptation to injustice, because there is no situation in which the feelings of malice and envy may not operate; and in which we may not see others of our own rank and standing, far more successful and prosperous than we. There is, besides, in every one so much partiality to himself, which while it leads him to fix his view chiefly on his own personal merits, and to magnify them in his own estimation, prevents him from sufficiently acknowledging the worth and qualifications of others.

Of all this a good man will soon be satisfied, from his own experience; and he will endeavour to guard against this injustice by judging of the pretensions of a rival, or even of an enemy, as he would have done, had there been no interference between his claims and theirs. In other words, he will endeavour to do justice to their merits; and to bring himself to love and honour the goodness and genius which have eclipsed his own. Nor will he retire in disgust from the race, because he has been outstripped by others; but will redouble his exertions in the service of mankind; recollecting that if Providence has been more bountiful to others than to him, he has left open to all the theatre of virtue; whence the merits of individuals are determined, not by their actual attainments, but by the use and improvement which they make of those advantages which their situation has afforded them*.

When we are tempted to depreciate the worth and talents of others, we should recollect, that we not only do injustice to our fellow-creatures, but offer an affront to God; and that in allowing ourselves to feel a secret

* Stewart's Outlines.

satisfaction in those events that may lower their reputation, or circumscribe their usefulness, we act in opposition to the principles of truth and benevolence. There is no individual with whose situation are not connected some duties and advantages; and when, in any case, we injuriously attempt to lessen his reputation, we are guilty of an act of baseness and injustice, of a nature far more aggravated than if we had purloined his property.

Who would not feel alarmed at the thought of incurring the criminality of narrowing the usefulness, and of diminishing the happiness, of a single individual, however slender his talents, or obscure his condition? Are not our own failures in duty sufficiently numerous without implicating ourselves in the responsibilities of others? Shall we degrade our common nature by peevishly detracting from the gifts and graces with which God has adorned and distinguished any of his creatures? Do we not consult our own happiness by cherishing that charity which suffereth long and is kind; which envieth not; which vaunteth not itself, which is not puffed up,—which thinketh no evil, which rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth?

If it be our duty to exercise candour, in forming an opinion of the character and abilities of others, it is surely meet that we should put the most favourable construction on their intentions, and allude with charitable feeling to their motives. These are so far removed from our observation, that we can only ascertain their nature from their effects; and even here we are so liable to mistake, that we are bound to speak of them under the impression that the heart is known

to God alone. We ought to do so, because it is probable, from many considerations, that the intentions, even in cases apparently doubtful, may be good, or, at least, not so bad as we might imagine. When we make a due allowance for a false conception of facts; for prejudices formed through the influence of prevailing fashions; for habits insensibly contracted in early years, and which it is so difficult wholly to relinquish at a subsequent period of life; we shall find that the motives of others are not so blameworthy, at least, generally, as we are apt to suppose.

Admitting, however, that they are bad, and that they proceed from malice, it belongs to Him whose prerogative it is to judge the heart, to declare that they are so. We move out of our sphere, when we presume to meddle with the peculiar province of the Almighty: nor can we be guilty of injustice in this way to others, without diminishing the sum of our own enjoyment. There is not a more unequivocal mark of our being under the influence of improper feelings ourselves, than a disposition to attribute bad designs to others; and there certainly can be no state of mind less amiable in itself, or more unfavourable to tranquillity and happiness. It becomes us to guard against its indulgence, not only as it leads us to violate a duty which we owe to our neighbour, but as it debases our own feelings, and injures our own peace. “Why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ. So, then, every one of us shall give an account of himself to God. Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but

judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall, in his brother's way."

We are chargeable with slander when we fabricate tales of falsehood to lessen, and, if possible, to destroy, the reputation of others, or when we take pleasure in rehearsing such tales, though we are not their authors. Those who put such tales into circulation may be much more blamable than the inventors, inasmuch as they lend them the weight of their character and influence. They are not the forgers; but they are the persons who give the forgeries currency, and without whose instrumentality they would remain innoxious. Their motive is often malicious; proceeding from a disposition to interfere in the concerns of others; or, from the wish to lower them beneath their accustomed level, that they themselves may rise in the same proportion. What conduct can be more base, more expressive of depravity of heart, or more ruinous to the peace of society? They are accordingly ranked in Scripture with the most criminal of mankind. "Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people; neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy neighbour*." "Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evil doer, or as a busybody in other men's matters†."

Nor is the criminality of the slanderer diminished by the circumstance, that the tale put into circulation is true. His guilt may be just as great as if it were false; his motive is not less base; and his conduct in its consequences may be more mischievous. Who

* Lev. xix. 16.

† 1 Pet. iv. 15.

has given me a title to publish to the world that failing of my neighbour which I alone have discovered? The disclosure of it may impair his usefulness and happiness for life; while its concealment could have injured no one; and his activity and talents, exerted under the purifying influence of repentance, might be employed with greater benefit to mankind. I become the instrument of ruin to him and to his family, of sorrow to his friends and connexions; and I accomplish this without necessity, without subserving any end of justice or of benevolence, without profit to myself, and without any pleasure but that of a deeply depraved heart.

We become accessory to the crime of the slanderer when we patiently listen to him. Did we habitually repel with indignation the first whisper unfavourable to the reputation of our neighbour, we should at once deserve and obtain the gratitude of the person whose character we vindicated, and arrest the progress of the slanderer. But mankind too generally seem to feel a secret satisfaction in listening to the recital of what is censurable in their fellow-creatures; as if their self-approbation rose in proportion as others' were made to fall; or, as if that censorious spirit which is so natural to them was regaled by an account of the real or imputed failings of the species. Thus encouragement is given to the destroyers of character and reputation, and to the producers of suspicion and discord among mankind.

The object of the slanderer is the destruction, not of property, nor of life, but what is far dearer and more valuable than either;—character and reputation.

Our reputation is high or low, according to the place which we hold in human estimation. It altogether rests on the good opinion and affections of others. It is justly more precious to every man than silver and gold, and as a source of enjoyment, second only to the approbation of conscience. To be beloved by others, and to feel that we are not unworthy of being thus beloved, are chief elements in the happiness of man. But it is the object of the slanderer, and the direct tendency of his conduct, to deprive us of this happiness.

Our character also, for trustworthiness, depends upon the good opinion of others. Without this character, the great majority of persons could not procure a subsistence. It is necessary in all the offices of human life, and in all the departments of the business of this world. It must therefore be dear to every man whose means of living and of supporting himself and his family, almost entirely rest on his reputation for honesty and integrity. Deprive him of this reputation, that is, succeed in making the world believe that he is void of principle, and unworthy of confidence, and you take bread, comfort, and respectability from himself and his dependents. But is it not the object of the slanderer—at least, is it not the tendency, and may it not be the effect of his most criminal practice, to accomplish this?

Further ; our chief instrument for usefulness in the world, is the hold which we have upon the good opinions and affections of our fellow-creatures. It is just in proportion to the estimation in which they hold us, that we have power to influence others, and

to advance the temporal and eternal interests of man. Deprive any individual of this moral strength, and what good can he achieve? In the midst of crowds he is solitary; no man regards him; and it may even prove a hinderance to what is highly beneficial, that it was he who first proposed it. To be reduced to this condition is indeed a most grievous calamity. If the chief design of man during his residence on earth, is to glorify God, by suggesting and countenancing deeds of benevolence and patriotism, and by doing good to the extent of his opportunity,—and, if in the exercise of this power he experiences pure and perpetual enjoyment,—what is the wickedness, and what the criminality, of the person who succeeds in whole or in part in frustrating this design of the Creator, and in destroying the means which would have increased the virtue and happiness of mankind?

Our reputation also is in many cases an useful restraint upon us. I do not say that in the absence of every better motive, the conduct and actions proceeding from this, are entitled to the name of virtue. But if character be an instrument by which we may glorify God, and increase the happiness of man, it must be lawful to desire it, to guard against the loss of it when acquired, and, in certain circumstances, to refrain from things which in themselves are neither morally good or evil, merely from regard to our reputation. In very many cases, mankind are restrained from doing what is bad, and encouraged in the performance of what is good, by a concern for their reputation. It is the object of the slanderer to remove this restraint, to take away this stimulus, and to afford

the evil passions of his fellows wider scope in the production of sin and misery.

The mischief which he produces is great, in proportion to the respectability, the usefulness, and the eminence of the persons whom he attacks. Are they ministers of the gospel, whose influence chiefly rests on their personal reputation and character? What a barrier may he be instrumental in raising up, to render inefficient all efforts to win and save souls. Are they magistrates whom he attacks, whose character should be unsullied, and a great part of whose usefulness rests on the estimation in which they are held? Then the slander is the means of producing greater mischief than he can be aware of, till he appear before the tribunal of the eternal Judge.

Finally, the slanderer is under the frown, and exposed to the indignation of Almighty God. "Lord who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a report against his neighbour."

CHAPTER XXX.

OATHS.

THE forms in which oaths have been administered have been various in different ages and nations. Among the Jews, the juror lifted up his right hand,

while he repeated the customary words of the oath*, —a form which is retained in Scotland.

Mr. Paley remarks, and I entirely concur in his opinion, that in no country in the world are the forms of oaths worse contrived, either to convey the meaning, or to impress the obligation of an oath, than in England. “The juror with us,” says he, “after repeating the promise or affirmation which the oath is intended to confirm, adds, ‘So help me God:’ or, more frequently the substance of the oath is repeated to the juror, by the officer or magistrate who administers it, adding in the conclusion, ‘So help me God.’ The juror while he hears or repeats the words of the oath, holds his right hand on a bible, or other book, containing the four gospels. This obscure and elliptical form, together with the levity and frequency with which it is administered, has brought about a general inadvertency to the obligation of oaths; which, both in a religious and political view, is much to be lamented.” There can be no doubt that the requiring of oaths on so many frivolous occasions has a great tendency to diminish the sense of significancy and solemnity in the minds of the people. A pound of tea cannot travel regularly from the ship to the consumer, without costing half a dozen oaths at least; and the same security for the due discharge of their office, namely, that of an oath, is required from a churchwarden, and an archbishop, a petty constable and the chief justice of England. The cause of public morals requires a considerable change in the manner and in the frequency with which oaths are administered.

* Psalm 144.

The great solemnity of an oath consists,—

I. In its being an appeal to the Omniscience of God. It is deliberately calling upon him to whom the heart is known, to witness the truth of what is affirmed. If on no occasion his name should be pronounced but with the profoundest reverence, it should be with deep seriousness, and only on such occasions as the ends of justice imperiously require, that we venture to swear by his being and perfections.

II. It is a reference to his decision in the judgment of the great day. This, indeed, is expressed in the form of oath administered in Scotland. The nature of an oath implies it. We hereby most solemnly signify our belief, not only that God is the witness of our thoughts and our conduct, but that he will punish with awful severity those who in defiance of all the sanctions of religion, and of the retributive justice of God, declare falsehood. The violation of truth in such circumstances is a contempt of God, and indicates the extreme of human depravity.

III. An oath is the last means to which mankind can have recourse, to ascertain each other's veracity. In this view "men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation, is an end of all strife." They of necessity must give greater credit to it than to a bare affirmation, from the greater solemnity of the circumstances attending it, and from their having nothing better beyond to which they can trust. Perjury, therefore, is the most aggravated crime, since it is not only a contempt of God; but, in its consequences, strikes at the property and life of man, and at the very existence of society.

There are some professing christians who are of opinion that the taking of oaths in evidence, or for any purpose whatever, is unlawful. In vindication of their views they allege the language of our Lord: "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths. But I say unto you swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil *."

This language is obviously a prohibition of vain and unauthorized swearing, and does not at all relate to judicial oaths. The persons whom it immediately censures are profane swearers. Our Lord himself when examined upon oath in the presence of the high-priest made no objection to answer the questions proposed to him. The Apostle Paul repeatedly uses the form of an oath: "I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you, I come not as yet to Corinth."

* Matt. chap. v. 33—38.

CHAPTER XXXI.

SUBSCRIPTION TO ARTICLES OF RELIGION.

EVERY religious society, or church, has an unquestionable right to determine that its own creed shall be the creed which all who may be admitted to share its privileges shall profess to receive. The articles admitted into this creed may be too numerous, or, some of them may even be erroneous; but if a voluntary society choose to adopt them, who has a right to hinder? and if they adopt them as the expression of their own religious belief, may they not require that all who shall be admitted into communion with them shall be of the same sentiments? This remark holds true, more especially in regard to those who are proposed as candidates for the sacred office.

“The inquiry concerning subscription,” says Paley, “will be, *quis imposuit, et quo animo?* The bishop who receives the subscription, is not the imposer, any more than the crier of a court, who administers the oath to the jury and witnesses, is the person that imposes it; nor, consequently, is the private opinion or interpretation of the bishop of any signification to the subscriber, one way or the other. The compilers of the Thirty-nine Articles are not to be considered as the imposers of subscription, any more than the framer or drawer up of a law is the person that arrests it. The Legislature of the 13th Elizabeth is the imposer, whose intention the subscriber is bound to satisfy.

“ They who contend that nothing less can justify subscription to the thirty-nine articles, than the actual belief of each and every separate proposition contained in them, must suppose, that the legislature expected the consent of ten thousand men, and that in perpetual succession, not to one controverted proposition, but to many hundreds. It is difficult to conceive how this could be expected by any who observed the incurable diversity of human opinion upon all subjects short of demonstration.” He adds, that the authors of the law intended to exclude from offices in the church, all abettors of popery ; Anabaptists ; and Puritans.

While this distinguished author restricts his observations to the articles of religious belief of the Church of England, they are susceptible of any latitude ; and in the few remarks which I shall offer, I shall consider them as more or less applicable to the confessions of faith of every church.

I. I agree with Mr. Paley in thinking, that the opinion or interpretation of the official person who receives our subscription to articles of religious belief, should have no weight with the subscriber. His sentiments may be different from the obvious and only meaning of that “ form of words” which he requires us to sign as the confession of our faith. His opinion, therefore, should be received by us only as an opinion, which, if founded in truth, we are to receive, and if erroneous, we should reject. We are to use proper means for the correct understanding of the formula under consideration ; and for ascertaining its conformity to the doctrines of divine revelation. Should

the result be, a conviction that it is either in whole or in part fundamentally opposed to the oracles of God, or even, if we are not *fully* satisfied of its truth, I own I cannot discover on what ground, consistently with a good conscience, we can solemnly declare our belief in it.

II. According to Paley's view, articles of religious belief can scarcely in any case answer the end for which they are framed. In his apprehension, the meaning of these articles is of no moment to those who may be called to subscribe them; since their attention is to be exclusively occupied with the views of those by whom they have been enacted.

In regard to the thirty-nine articles, it matters not though we should never have seen them, if we can only ascertain what were the motives with which the parliament of the thirteenth of Elizabeth enjoined subscription to them as the condition of admission into the offices of the church. With respect to the confession of faith of the Church of Scotland, we need not give ourselves the trouble of reading it; since our only business is with the intentions of the legislature by which it received the sanction of the state. But is it not probable that there may be as great a difference as to the intentions of the legislature, as there is about the meaning of the different articles which the confession contains?

Mr. Paley tells us, that the parliament of England designed by the thirty-nine articles to exclude from offices in the church,—all abettors of popery; Anabaptists; and Puritans. This may be true, though it be not the whole truth. May it not still be asked,

is this *all* that they intended by subscription to these articles? Is there nothing more than this included in that part of his Majesty's declaration prefixed to the articles, in which it is ordained, that "no man hereafter shall either print or preach to draw the articles aside any way, but shall submit to it in the plain and full meaning thereof; and shall not put his own sense or comment to be the meaning of the article, but shall take it in the literal and grammatical sense?" Does not this language intimate, that our business is not with the intentions of the legislature, but with the literal and grammatical sense of the words which we are required to subscribe? Does it not plainly teach us, that the only intention of the legislature with which we are concerned is, that we take the words which they have prescribed in their obvious and literal acceptation? The design of the legislature by these articles, as it is set forth in the declaration alluded to, was for the avoiding of diversities of opinions, and for establishing of consent touching true religion: but this design is frustrated if men are to subscribe them without regard to their meaning, and to "convert them into articles of peace."

III. Upon Paley's principles, subscription to articles of faith should not be required by any church as the condition of admission into its offices. His reasoning against a literal interpretation of the thirty-nine articles, in so far as it proves any thing, tends to the conclusion that subscription to a confession of faith is in every case improper; and I would have considered it more candid to have made a frank avowal of a consequence which he must have foreseen as

necessarily resulting from his premises. "They who contend," says he, "that nothing less can justify subscription to the thirty-nine articles, than the actual belief of each and every separate proposition contained in them, must suppose, that the legislature expected the consent of ten thousand men, and that in perpetual succession, not to one controverted proposition, but to many hundreds. It is difficult to conceive how this could be expected by any who observed the incurable diversity of human opinion upon all subjects short of demonstration."

This reasoning, in as far as it proves any thing, proves too much; for if human opinion on all subjects short of demonstration has an incurable diversity, will not this diversity prevail with regard to what Mr. Paley considers to be the intentions of the legislature in excluding from the offices of the church? Articles of belief, according to this view, must in every case be improper, since there will always be a diversity of opinion among mankind on subjects that admit only of moral or probable evidence.

In this opinion I cannot concur. For, though it were admitted, that the articles which form the terms of communion in the reformed churches are too complex, and that they embrace as *fundamental*, what, among sincere believers in christianity, may fairly be the subject of diversity of opinion; still I should contend, that as there are first principles in all human science, so there must be in religion elementary truths, which, though better understood at one time than at another, are in all ages and for ever the same. Science, because it is susceptible of improvement,

must be subject to change, and the system of chemistry which may suit the present age may be quite antiquated in less than half a century ; but the doctrines of both natural and revealed religion, because they are immutable truth, are unalterable.

Is it objected to creeds and confessions, that they arrest the progress of knowledge, and are a hinderance to the human mind in the freedom of its inquiries? Does not this objection take for granted, that christian theology varies in different ages like those sciences which owe their existence, as well as their progress, to human discovery? A system of doctrine, which has been designed not to amuse but to save mankind, and which has its origin in the revelation which God has given to man, must be the same in all ages. Some of its truths may be more distinctly apprehended, and more impressively felt at one time than at another ; but they are in themselves essentially and always the same, and among the things most surely believed by all who hold "the Faith once delivered to the saints." In this respect the nineteenth century has no superiority over the first ; and the most distant and enlightened age will be sanctified and saved by the same discoveries of truth and mercy which gladdened the hearts of patriarchs and prophets, and for the excellency of the knowledge of which apostles, and martyrs, and confessors, counted all things but loss. The revelation which God has given of himself and of his counsels, has long ago been completed ; and, therefore, there can be nothing added to its great and fundamental doctrines. The denunciation is fearful against him who makes the attempt: "Though we,

or an angel from heaven, preached any other gospel unto you than that which we preached unto you, or than that which ye have received, let him be accursed *.”

IV. The doctrine of Paley authorizes us to commit an act which, on the principles of common honesty, is unjustifiable. It allows us solemnly to declare, that we believe what in fact we do not believe. Should not the man who would thus act in the intercourse and transactions of human life forfeit the reputation of uprightness? Paley maintained his view of subscription to the thirty-nine articles on the principle of expediency,—a principle, which as was formerly noticed, the oppressors and scourgers of mankind have ever professed to follow.

I take leave of this subject by remarking, that whatever opinion may be formed respecting the propriety of making articles of belief terms of communion in a christian church, every principle of equity and uprightness forbids us to subscribe to a confession of faith, unless we can *bond fide* declare, that it is substantially the expression of what we believe.

* Gal. i. 6.

BOOK VI.

ON THE DUTIES WHICH RESPECT OURSELVES.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

MAN, doubtless, is laid under the most sacred obligations to feel concerned for his own moral improvement and happiness, and to use all proper means to secure and promote them. These are duties which he owes to himself; and the violation of which is peculiarly criminal in him,—since he thus so far frustrates the glorious design of his being, by rendering himself unfit for discharging his obligations either to God or to man. Is it not in proportion as he takes pains in enlightening his understanding and conscience, that he is capable of clearly and readily discerning the will of God, and of forming just and enlarged conceptions of the rule of duty? Is it not in proportion to his diligence in cultivating the purest and best feelings, and in forming the best habits, that he rises in the scale of moral excellency? Is he not bound, therefore, by ties which it is guilt and misery to dissolve, to improve the means and opportunities with which Providence favours him for advancing in the attainments of piety, righteousness, and true holiness?

The obligations which more immediately terminate on himself, and which may therefore be styled the duties which he owes himself, may be classed under the heads of moderation and contentment, fortitude and a diligent attention to the formation of good habits, and prudence, or a suitable regard to his own happiness: we shall also notice some of the evils opposed to these.

CHAPTER II.

ON MODERATION.

MODERATION and contentment are in themselves nearly allied, involving the same views, and implying the exercise of the same virtuous dispositions and habits. The person who is truly temperate, from a practical knowledge of the will of God in reference to the chief ends of his being, is contented with the divine dispensations, persuaded that they are all directed by infinite wisdom and benevolence, and shall issue in great and eternal good. The chief elements of his happiness are within, in peace of conscience, the favour of God, and in the hope of everlasting felicity; he is therefore freed from the pain, and disappointment, and misery, of pursuing and substituting shadows for realities, and of repining at the difficulties and trials incident to his lot.

The duty of temperance or moderation is strongly recommended to us by the light of nature; and this recommendation revelation enforces by the weight of

its authority. It enjoins its disciples to let their moderation be known unto all men ; to avoid anxiety for the provision of the future ; to be painfully solicitous for nothing ; but to live in the exercise of trust in God ; and to have continual recourse to Him by prayer and supplications with thanksgiving.

Temptations to the neglect of this duty are numerous. There are many tendencies in human nature which would lead us to overlook its fulfilment. There are those desires which moralists term acquired, whose operation is often at variance with the dictates and the rules of temperance. The desire of wealth attaches an undue value to riches, and presents to our view the gaudiness and pomp of earthly grandeur, as highly conducive, if not essential, to a great share of enjoyment. We have imbibed, from our earliest years, prejudices and prepossessions which have gradually acquired strength and vigour from the working of passion within, and from the habitual pursuits of vanity from without, till at a more mature period of life their influence is so completely confirmed, as to bias and pervert the affections and judgment, and turn away the heart from the truth.

If this remark be true, to no inconsiderable extent, of mankind in general, how unquestionably is it so of him who has been nursed in the lap of luxury—whose wishes were no sooner formed than gratified—who has grown up, surrounded by all the symbols of wealth and fashion, and who is led by the circumstances of his lot, almost without reflection, to believe that life is not worth the possession unaccompanied with these its adventitious decorations. How natural for him is

it to think that he is in the pursuit of happiness when he is only in the pursuit of the outward form with which, in his estimation, it is indissolubly connected; and to imagine that, in attaining the honours and the wealth of the world, he is securing for himself some of the surest and most copious sources of happiness. It is not till much has been learned and suffered that such a person is practically convinced of the inutility of all external circumstances in communicating real satisfaction; and that he has recourse to those permanent sources of enjoyment which are so much within the reach of all, but which all are so prone to overlook.

My meaning is not, that either reason or revelation teaches us that all external circumstances are alike in reference to our nature, or are equally favourable to happiness;—that we can possess the same mental tranquillity in extreme indigence as in comparative abundance,—under the pressure of sickness and of sufferings, as in the full flow and vigour of health. It becomes us thankfully to receive, and temperately to use lawful means to secure and to enjoy the things which are necessary for our present sustenance and comfort; and we act sinfully when we attach to them a value which they do not possess, and pursue them with the concern and the estimation due to that which constitutes our highest good.

The obligation to cultivate the habit, and practice the duty of temperance and contentment, implies the existence and operation of that powerful principle of our nature which leads all men to seek their own happiness; since one of the grounds on which we are

bound to be moderate in all things is the close connexion between moderation and our present and ultimate good. It is not because there are any indisposed to pursue happiness that so many complain of the want of it ; but because many, either from ignorance or from the absence of self-government, neglect the cultivation of that religious and moral excellency in connexion with which it can be attained ; and who, while they eagerly grasp at fancied enjoyments precipitate themselves into absolute and irremediable woe. He who is intimately acquainted with the weaknesses of our frame, who has formed it susceptible of so much enjoyment, who has given us laws by which to regulate our powers and capacities, has commanded us to live soberly, and righteously, and godly,—to be so temperate in the use of things lawful, and in the exercise of our desires and affections, that our moderation may be seen of all men. This moderation is to be used in reference to bodily enjoyments ; to sorrow for the loss of friends or of property ; and to the indulgence of the desires and affections of the mind.

First, we are to exercise temperance in our bodily gratifications. Much of what we owe to ourselves as rational and accountable beings is included in this view of moderation ; and as there is no part of our duty of more difficult performance, so there is none that requires more continued self-denial in its practice. The mere gratification of those appetites which for wise and beneficent ends are connected with our bodily frame, cannot in itself, and apart from other considerations, be either praise or blame worthy,

virtuous or vicious. But, as we are endowed with these appetites in common with the inferior animals, it is obviously a degradation of our nature, as well as a violation of the authority of God and of our conscience, to seek any principal share of our happiness in their indulgence. To check these tendencies when they would go beyond the boundary which reason and revelation have fixed,—to shun even the enticements of pleasure lest they should tempt us to deviate from the onward path of duty, and successfully to combat the influence of evil company and example,—is the triumph of religion over the turbulent desires of human nature. That this triumph may be attained, it is necessary to be temperate in the lawful use of bodily gratification; and never to go to the extreme point, lest we should be tempted at any time to go beyond it.

Secondly, temperance or self-government implies moderation in the indulgence of sorrow on account of the loss of friends or of property. Reason indeed suggests this. No extreme of sorrow can be of avail in restoring to us the blessings of which by the providence of God we are deprived; and it becomes us, even on this ground, to restrain those painful emotions which bereavements naturally awaken. But christianity enforces this duty on higher grounds, and by the most persuasive and powerful motives. It was while the believers of Philippi were enduring many evils from their pagan relatives, who injured their persons and property, that they were reminded by apostolic authority of the duty of moderation. We have the means of knowing that they and their brethren in the faith were exemplary in its practice. For they endured a

great fight of afflictions ; partly whilst they were made a gazing stock, both by reproaches and afflictions ; and partly whilst they became companions of them that were so used ; and took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

.. There are other losses besides those of property—and which seem much more calculated to dry up the springs of human happiness. To persons of sensibility, what pain is so great as that which is felt at the death of those, whom they love ? When bereaved of dear and valuable friends, whose presence, because it has been long associated with their habitual feelings, and with the ever-recurring objects on which these feelings seem to be impressed, how natural is it for them to give way to the sorrow that overwhelms the mind, and which has been so appropriately denominated the sorrow that worketh death ! How melancholy must have been our situation under such circumstances, were we totally ignorant of the character of that Divine Being into whose hands we resign our spirits ; or if we had no intimation of the glorious immortality that awaits us. If, when called to witness the final departure of the friend of our heart, surrounded, it may be, with the interesting group for whose happiness that friend feels as intensely as for his own, no light appeared to illuminate the dark valley of the shadow of death, we were obliged to pronounce in the bitterest agony, “farewell for ever,” how truly wretched would have been our condition ! Were such the forlorn situation of man at the termination of his mortal career, we might almost conceive

- that the best affections of his nature, and all the tender susceptibilities with which he is endowed, had been given him merely to increase the poignancy of his anguish.

On a subject so intimately connected with the moral improvement and happiness of man, God has not left us to derive our consolation from mere inference—from the intimations respecting our immortality which the knowledge of his perfections and moral government, and of our nature and faculties might suggest. He has shewn us the path of life; and by the unbounded prospect opened up before us, he has raised our expectations to an eternal weight of glory. It was for this joy that was set before them, that the martyr and confessor seemed to exult in the flames, and meekly to endure all the arts of inflicting suffering employed by their tormentors; and animated by the firmest faith in the goodness of God, and in the truth of his promises, death itself ceased to be an object of terror. “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” The twilight that intervenes between time and eternity does, indeed, possess a melancholy gloom; but it will only remain till the curtain that conceals the glorious sunshine of immortality is withdrawn. Then sin and sorrow and separation shall cease; and there shall be no more death, neither any more pain; the former things having passed away.

Thirdly, in temperance, or self-government is included moderation in indulging the desires of the mind. Some of these are natural, as the desires of

knowledge, esteem, society, power, and happiness ; others are acquired, as the desire of wealth, and its concomitants. A considerable part of true morality consists in the proper regulation of these desires, and in seeking their gratification only in subordination to the divine authority, and to the higher ends of our being. Out of the heart, we are assured, proceed the issues of life ; according to the affections and desires habitually entertained there, will be the tenor of the conduct ; and no reformation, therefore, can be effectual which aims not at the thorough melioration of the inward as well as the outward man. “ Either make the tree good and his fruit corrupt : for the tree is known by his fruits. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things ; and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.”

Even desires which are in themselves lawful, must be indulged under the restraints of conscience, and the direction of the purest and the best motives. Unless reduced to this subjection, they will always be prone to mislead, and in many cases they will go beyond the boundaries of virtue. Can the man who is ever fixing his thoughts on the honour of the world, who indulges himself in ambitious views and projects, and whose fancy dwells on the fleeting visions which the love of fame and of distinction calls into existence, have the moderation or the hardihood to withstand temptation, when it addresses itself to the weakness and the corruption of his nature ? Will he who makes gold his hope, and who has said to the fine gold, thou art my confidence, who has consecrated his best

thoughts to the love of money, and who connects his happiness with its attainment, be likely to resist the snares which so invariably accompany the immoderate desire of wealth? Though the habitual and inordinate indulgence of an affection should not discover the strength it has acquired by any immorality of conduct, it is not, therefore, innocent in the sight of God. He requires, what he is entitled to receive, the supremacy of the heart; and no idol should sit upon that throne which he claims as his own. In resisting this claim, in yielding to the dominion of any inordinate desire,—such as the love of wealth, or of honour, or of rank, or even to a painful anxiety as to the means of subsistence, we dishonour God, and reflect censure on the providential arrangements of that compassionate parent, whose tender mercies are over all his works, and who is the never-failing refuge of his people.

How numerous are the motives to urge us to the practice of temperance in the various ways which have now been mentioned. The consideration of the health and the happiness which its exercise secures, is no trifling inducement. Did we only consider the inestimable value of this advantage, it seems scarcely possible that we could resist the force of so palpable a motive. Did we remember how much, from the constitution of our nature, our happiness depends on a simple reliance upon God, and on a course of action conformable to his will, we should, for our own sakes, be temperate, not only in the outward act, but in the indulgence of the affections and desires of the mind. How soon may the schemes which gratify ambition, or cherish the inordinate wish for wealth, or that

foster the love of distinction and superiority, be frustrated, and leave their projectors overwhelmed with misery and disappointment : while those who exercise moderation in all things, and who endeavour to devise and to act agreeably to the will of God, by placing their supreme affections on the portion that can never forsake them, have the peace of God amid all the trials and the changes of the world. They shall be, to use the beautiful and expressive language of revelation, “ like trees planted by the rivers of waters, that bring forth their fruit in their season, and whose leaves do not wither.” They look for their happiness to sources that are independent of change ; they allow their desires to be unchecked only in reference to objects that cannot disappoint them ; they have intrusted to the care of omnipotence all that is necessary for their accommodation on earth, and all that is requisite to complete their happiness in eternity ; and should they meet with reverses in their lot, they cannot be greatly depressed by evils which are incapable of impairing their incorruptible and unfading inheritance. Thus, from their trust in God, from the value they attach to his love and approbation, are they prepared to say, in the subdued tone of sublime devotion ; “ Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, the labour of the olive should fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

CHAPTER III.

ON CONTENTMENT.

THE influence of contentment on the religious and moral state of the heart, as well as on the manner in which man discharges the duties which he owes to man, places it high in the rank of virtues. It is enjoined on various grounds in the Scriptures: "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content *.—Be content with such things as ye have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee †."

Contentment is a state of mind resulting from religion, and is to be distinguished from mere indifference, from gaiety of disposition, and from good-humour. In order to exercise this virtue, it is not necessary that we should feel indifferent to the evils connected with the circumstances in which we are placed. On the contrary, it implies the existence of events not in themselves agreeable to us; but to which we feel it to be our duty to reconcile our minds, by moderating our desires after unattainable good, and by bearing with equanimity and resignation our difficulties and trials. Without the combination of these two exercises of mind,—moderation in our desires for earthly enjoyment, and a sustaining of the burden which Pro-

* 1 Tim. vi. 6—8.

† Heb. xiii. 5.

vidence is pleased to lay upon us with patience and cheerfulness, there can be no contentment.—This state of mind is enforced and recommended, by the consideration of the virtues included in its exercise; of the cause from which its opposite, discontent, proceeds; of the immediate advantages which it brings the possessor; of the perishable nature of all earthly enjoyments, and the enduring and eternal happiness of heaven.

I. Contentment is enforced and recommended by the consideration of the virtues which are included in its exercise. It implies a frame of mind so virtuous; that its possessor is at peace with himself. This is an essential pre-requisite to a contented heart, without which there could not be satisfaction on earth,—no, nor in heaven. While the conscience frowns, and directs to a fearful looking-for of judgment, how can any outward circumstances please, and how can the mind be peaceful and serene? It must be capable of looking to God with delight, to the future with hope; and to itself with tranquillity, before it can experience the happiness of contentment.

But, besides this, there must be such a conviction of the infinite excellency of the divine government, and such a humble hope of being interested in the divine favour, as will lead to a cheerful acquiescence in all the dispensations of God. The conviction that the supreme government under which we are placed, though it may occasionally seem to us surrounded with clouds and darkness, and though the scenes through which we are called to pass be often perplexing and distressing, is founded in benevolence, as well as in justice and in

wisdom is necessary to the possession of comfort. This view, therefore, of the procedure of God is presented to us under a variety of aspects in Scripture; and is presented for the purpose of being contemplated with joy and gratitude. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.—Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down. The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works."

Nor is it less necessary that we should have a humble hope of being interested in the favour of God: This hope is well founded only when it rests on the mercy of God revealed and offered through a Mediator. From this is derived a powerful motive to a cheerful acquiescence in the dispensations of God, however trying they may be. We are assured by the most incontrovertible proofs, that our sufferings are not inflicted arbitrarily, but justly and mercifully, for the purpose of promoting the divine glory and our eternal good. Nor can we ever doubt this, while we believe that a gift of unspeakable excellency and value has already been conferred,—of far greater intrinsic value than the happiness of immortality; that, consequently, God does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men; and that all the ills we endure

form a necessary part of that discipline by which He is preparing his children for a nobler state of being. Though these ills cannot be shunned, they are all under the control, and arise by the appointment of our heavenly Father. Coming from Him, and allotted to us by his wisdom and mercy, shall we murmur under them? "What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

With this view of the dispensations of God towards us,—of the equity and goodness by which they are all directed, we shall be disposed to feel cheerful and contented under them, whatever be their immediate complexion. However dark and inexplicable, we know that they are made to subserve the real and ultimate happiness of them that love God;—and that the period will come, when even we ourselves shall see that they have been mercifully as well as wisely ordered.

Our feelings of acquiescence will be strengthened by the conviction of our personal unworthiness. If we are sinners, if we have violated the law of our Maker, what claim have we to his goodness? If we are not sinners, resignation is so far from being a duty, that we ought to feel indignant at the injustice which is done us in the afflictions which we are required to endure. If we are not sinners, we have not deserved these sufferings; and if we have not deserved them, there is injustice in their infliction.

But who can deny his having violated the commandments of God? With the conviction that he has done so, must not every man confess, whatever be the nature or number of his trials, that his sufferings are

less than his iniquities deserve? In marking the number and variety of his mercies, has he not ample ground for grateful admiration at the goodness of God? Will not his feelings correspond to those of the patriarch, when he said, "I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant." In the language recorded in another part of the sacred volume, will he not express his thankfulness to the bountiful giver of all good? "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies."

II. Contentment is recommended by a consideration of the causes from which its opposite, discontent, proceeds. These are such as no good man would wish to indulge, and the ascendancy of which is incompatible with a virtuous state of mind. They are, ingratitude, envy, folly, selfishness, and presumption.

Discontent springs from ingratitude to God our constant Benefactor. We overlook the being, the powers, the numerous susceptibilities of enjoyment which he has bestowed upon us; the guardianship which he continually exercises in regard to us; and because one thing is withheld, to which we, perhaps, attach an undue value, or because a gift of which we had long the use is resumed, we repine at his dealings as though they were unjust. Or perhaps the object of desire is still more fervently wished for, that it is

seen in the possession of another, and conceived to contribute to his happiness. In this case our murmurings against Providence are increased by envying the success or prosperity of our neighbour.

Do we not by this conduct *charge God foolishly*? Does it not imply that we are wiser than He;—that if we had had the distribution of the gifts of providence, they should have been more advantageously disposed of than by the present arrangement? How selfish, how criminal, how presumptuous, is the state of mind from which such conduct originates! We, the creatures, the servants of the Lord God Almighty, arraign the procedure of our supreme moral governor and judge, and find fault with the station, the service, the reward, which he assigns to us. Has he not an unquestionable right to dispose of us and of ours just as it pleaseth him? Is it not lawful for Him to do what he will with his own? “Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him: He that reproveth God let him answer it.”

Ought it not to lead us to subdue every feeling of discontent, and to resist the operation of those evil passions from which it originates, to reflect on the unhappiness which necessarily accompanies it. Does not experience tell us, that the possession of the object of our wishes, in no case secures to us the happiness which we had anticipated? If that, on which we have now set our inclinations is attainable, our exertions are far more likely to be effective in attaining it without discontent than with it. This disturbs the mind, and incapacitates it for the full and prudential exercise of its energies.

In a word, how odious must discontent appear, and how truly base must we ourselves acknowledge the ingratitude, the envy, the selfishness, the presumption to be, from which it proceeds, when we compare our own lot with that of thousands around us. They also are the servants of God, and have equal claims to his bounty that we have. Yet how many are the blessings which we enjoy that have not been communicated to them. Is it property that we are solicitous to obtain? How many persons are there in the same rank of life poorer than we? Is it promotion we long to obtain? Has not Providence done already for us more in this way than for many who entered the world with equal prospects? Is it honour, is it office, are they connexions we are in search of? Let us look abroad on the world, and feel ashamed that we should murmur for the want of what many persons more deserving than we are destitute of, and which, did we possess them, would contribute little to our happiness.

III. Contentment is recommended to us by the consideration of the immediate advantages which it brings the possessor. It is the source of continual peace and serenity of mind; it produces a cheerful acquiescence in the dispensations of providence, whatever they may be; and because it moderates the desires to attainable good, it preserves us from much vexation and disappointment. A contented person is, therefore, eminently happy;—happy in enjoying the undeserved gifts of his Heavenly Father;—and happy in fulfilling the duties of that station, and of those relations, which God has assigned to him.

Nor is he less a source of happiness to all who are

near him. His presence communicates delight and confidence. His thankful, serene, and peaceful spirit, diffuses itself, as it were, around him; and he thus alleviates, both in regard to himself and others, those calamities which none, in the present chequered scene, can escape. He experiences the truth of the apostolic declaration, that “godliness with contentment is great gain.”

IV. Contentment is recommended to us by the consideration of the perishable nature of all earthly enjoyments, and the enduring and eternal happiness of heaven. Worldly good is almost always estimated above its real value; and hence the inordinate desire with which it is pursued, and the vexation and disappointment with which the pursuit is accompanied. Nor is it possible that real contentment can be experienced, till this kind of good is seen in its true light, and treated according to its real nature;—till our desires for its enjoyment are so moderated, that we shall expect from it that gratification only which the will of God has designed it to impart.

All earthly good is limited, fleeting, perishable: but the Gospel sets before us good of another nature, which is unlimited, enduring, and eternal,—which yields the purest satisfaction even in anticipation, and which accumulates in the possession;—and which, in the very pursuit, is happiness. He only is truly contented who has fixed his heart on this as his portion;—who enjoys all temporal blessings with thankfulness to his Heavenly Father, but who thinks not of murmuring when they are resumed or withheld,—and who expects to realize, after a few years shall have elapsed,

the truth of the promise, " Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*."

CHAPTER IV.

ON WORLDLY ANXIETY.

There are three evils which are opposed to contentment, and which of course are productive of much discontent: these I shall consider in their order:—they are worldly anxiety; the inordinate desire of worldly enjoyment, or covetousness; and the love of power, or the principle of ambition.

Worldly anxiety is a harassing concern either for our own comfort, or the comfort of those who are justly dear to us. It may be partly occasioned by the experience or the apprehension of trials. We feel that we are continually liable to afflictions, losses, and disappointments, which we cannot possibly escape. We are naturally led to make every exertion to avoid their recurrence in future, as well as to obtain that measure of worldly good which we conceive to be necessary to an exemption from some of the most painful of them. We are extremely desirous, it may be, to make provision for the objects of our affection,—a feeling which, when indulged in moderation, is in itself amiable and laudable, but which, when entertained with undue fervour and frequency, pro-

* 1 Cor. ii. 9.

duces an anxious frame of mind. Especially is this the case, when the kind and overruling providence of God is overlooked, or when there is not implicit confidence reposed in it.

It is unnecessary to point out, at any length, the folly and sinfulness of this temper of mind. It is foolish, since it is anxiety respecting what is in itself uncertain, fleeting, and what, however largely possessed, must be soon and for ever parted with; and also because it is utterly unavailing to the attainment of that which is so much desired. "Which of you by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If then ye be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?" It is sinful, because it disturbs and perplexes the mind, unqualifies for the prudent, successful, and acceptable discharge of duty, and since it tends to confirm that distrust in God, in his protecting goodness and care, from which, at first, it chiefly proceeded. It often issues in discontent, to which, in every stage of its progress, it is nearly allied; while it awakens the ingratitude, envy, selfishness, and presumption, which the human heart is so prone to indulge. Has it not a pernicious influence on the temper, the peace, the domestic quiet, of the person under its influence? Does it not expose him to the temptation of undervaluing the interests of others, and of using unwarrantable means to gain possession of what has given him so much concern, and which he estimates so highly?

But, it may be asked, is intense anxiety sinful in all circumstances, and in reference to all things?

Is there no occasion on which even a painful and harassing anxiety may be lawfully indulged? To this question the Scriptures give an explicit reply. "Be careful for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus*." Our Saviour has given a direction similar to that of the Apostle. "Take no thought for the morrow: the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on†."

This reiterated command shews that worldly anxiety is prohibited in all circumstances. The chief reason assigned for the prohibition is, that God takes charge of the creatures that he has made;—that he feeds the fowls of the air, and that therefore he will feed us,—that he clothes the grass of the field, and that therefore he will surely clothe those whom he has endowed with life and understanding. "Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) For your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

The same inspired volume which contains pro-

* Phil. iv. 6, 7.

† Matt. vi. 25—34.

hibitions against wordly anxiety, presents to us a remedy under those evils, by the fear of which it is occasioned. We are commanded, *in everything*, to trust in God, to apply to him for support and relief, and to address our supplications to him with the fervour, the constancy, and confidence of those who regard him as the hearer of prayer. The state of mind which this exercise requires, and which, when engaged in with proper motives, it always produces, is opposed to a feverish, harassing anxiety: while it is favourable to the serenity, the joy, and hope which result from the lively faith of the Gospel. In making our request known unto God by prayer and supplications with thanksgiving, can we fail to experience the peace which is promised,—the peace which arises from a firm belief, a humble reliance, in the power, goodness, faithfulness, and overruling providence of God: the conviction, that he ever watches over us, that he ever pities us; that whatever can befall us shall take place only by his appointment or permission; and that all the dispensations through which we may be called to pass, shall, if we love him, be made to work together for our good.

How essential to our happiness and usefulness is this peace, which, if we shall only use the prescribed means of obtaining, we may fully enjoy! Its worth, its influence on our moral feelings and character, as well as the source from which it proceeds, entitles it to the description which the Apostle Paul has given of it,—“The peace of God, that passeth all understanding, and that keeps the heart and

mind, through Christ Jesus." With this heavenly principle, soothing our sorrows, moderating our desires, and elevating our hopes, we are happy in ourselves, and are the means of giving happiness to others: we are not only freed from a fertile source of temptation, but have ever present with us the motives and the frame of mind favourable to the exercise of righteousness, kindness, and truth. So close is the connexion between the possession of christian contentment and the practice of morality.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE INORDINATE DESIRE OF WORLDLY ENJOYMENT, OR COVETOUSNESS.

THIS is another of the evils which are opposed to contentment. It is closely allied to worldly anxiety; so much so, indeed, that it seems impossible to indulge the one, without giving way, in some measure, to the other.

It is not unlawful to desire worldly good, when the desire is indulged within the bounds of christian moderation. Even when that good is in the possession of others, we may, without sin, desire it, provided it be lawful in the owners to part with it, and provided also, that we are willing to give an equivalent. It is the inordinate desire of this,—that is, such a desire as is unreasonable, as is unsuited to the principles and prospects of a christian, as surpasses the real value of the object wished for, and is accompanied with

anxiety and disquietude,—it is this which is sinful. It is, therefore, prohibited in its earliest spring in the heart: “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour’s *.”—“But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.” “For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness †.”

In all ranks and circumstances of society, man is exposed to temptations to indulge this evil desire. Property secures to its possessor, influence, splendid accommodation and equipage, luxury, and the objects of his wishes generally, in so far as these are limited to earthly good. Hence, its acquisition is sought after, by men of all professions, and from the highest to the lowest of the community. Is it not natural for those who have, at any time, experienced embarrassment from a deficiency of this commodity, anxiously to provide against a recurrence of similar difficulties? It procures to the young indulgences to which youth attaches so much value; to those engaged in the busy scenes of life, weight and authority among their associates; and to the aged the attention and respect which age of itself, unaccompanied with the possession of property, sometimes fails in securing. Can we

* Exod. xx. 17.

† 1 Tim. vi. 9—11.

wonder that an instrument by which we can work so many changes,—which so effectually alters our condition in regard to others, and the condition of others in regard to us,—and which all may lawfully exert themselves to obtain,—can we wonder that all should be in danger of pursuing it eagerly, inordinately, and sinfully?

The guilt of covetousness is affirmed by the Apostle Paul, when he declares that it is idolatry, an alienation of heart and of affection from God, which excludes from the kingdom of Christ and of God. He also declares it to be the root of all evil, the parent of almost every sin, the spring of private and public mischief and misery. When the love of money has acquired possession of the heart, it hardens and shuts it against the admission of every softening and generous feeling,—it steals it away from every pure and spiritual object,—and leaves no room for the holy presence of that God who condescends to dwell with men. Religion apart, it often produces the most extraordinary and almost incredible transformations on human character; converting the warm and affectionate friend of our youth, who wept when we wept, and who rejoiced when we rejoiced, into the cold and unfeeling misanthropist, who is alike indifferent to all that can create light or make darkness, and who wraps himself up in the narrow covering of his own selfishness.

Covetousness is a vice more general than any other, and is, perhaps, more frequently the occasion of secret and open apostacy from the purity of religion. Under the mask of frugality; a laudable economy, and the desire of making a competent provision for a family, it

may be strengthening its position in the citadel of the heart, and producing a wide separation between God and the soul. While there remains a semblance of devotion and the wonted regularity in observing its ordinances, this enemy may have acquired a firm possession ; and so complete, at length, may its mastery become, that the man under its influence shall lose every susceptibility of either spiritual or generous emotion.

The poor are as liable to indulge this vice as the rich. It does not consist, either in the act of acquiring, or of possessing wealth, but in placing the heart upon it ; and that all are too apt to yield to it, is amply attested by the consciences of all, and by the declarations of the sacred oracles.

Covetousness leads to the commission of almost every crime : it is, as the Apostle declares, the root of all evil. The Scriptures hold up to our view its debasing influence on Balaam, who loved the wages of unrighteousness :—on Judas, who, for thirty pieces of silver, sold his Divine Master :—on Demas, who deserted the ministry of the gospel, having loved this present world :—on Demetrius and his associates, who, for the sake of gain, zealously supported a system of idolatrous superstition. What instigates the murderer, in defiance of the authority of God and of his own conscience, to take away the life of a fellow-creature ? It is the inordinate desire of property. To the same cause we may trace all the crimes of the persons who render gaols and bridewells necessary ;—theft, swindling, robbery, forgery, smuggling, perjury.

How perniciously is the influence of this vice felt in every situation of life ! The poor, in particular, are often painfully made to feel it, by the medium of *wicked balances*, and *deceitful weights* : the rich, in the avaricious and unprincipled conduct of dependants, and those to whom they intrust their business : the young, in the worldly views and feelings of their parents, who pay far greater regard to the wealth of the persons with whom they lead them to form permanent connexions, than to their moral and religious worth ; and the aged, in the interested conduct of those around them, whose eyes are continually fixed on the advantages they are to derive from their death. It is covetousness that hardens the heart of the oppressor, and makes it insensible to the cries and the tears of the hapless victims of his inhumanity and cruelty. What calamity can happen, either in private or public life, which this vice does not aggravate, if it does not originate ?

But in yielding to this passion, do not mankind give way to an illusion ? How unsatisfactory and fleeting is all the good which gold can purchase ? He who possessed it in rich abundance, and who procured by it all the gratifications which it can afford, has confessed, that all is vanity and vexation of spirit. Even when attained almost to the limit of our wishes, how uncertain is the possession ! “ Riches make themselves wings, and fly away.” Though the possession should be retained till death, how awful is the future and eternal condition of the person who has given his heart to mammon ! After having spent a

feverish, anxious, earthly life, in the neglect of all the great purposes for which life is bestowed, what is his reward? He may have accumulated riches; and in this he gained the end of his pursuit: but he “shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Gold is thus purchased at a price of incalculable magnitude. Though the whole world were gained, it is at the expense of the soul: “and what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”

The effectual way of shutting out from our hearts the love of the world, is habitually to cherish the love of God. Were we ever endeavouring to enlarge our conceptions of his power, love, and all-sufficiency;—of the comparative worthlessness of whatever would alienate our affections from him;—and of the true and eternal happiness to which he has called us to aspire, we should feel ourselves more at liberty to run in the way of the commandments. “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*.” To this apostolic exhortation I will add that of a distinguished prophet: “Beware, lest when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied, then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God; and thou say in thine heart, My power, and the might of mine

* 1 John ii. 16—20.

hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth *."

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE LOVE OF POWER; OR, THE PRINCIPLE OF AMBITION.

THIS is another of the evils which are directly opposed to the virtue and happiness of man. Ambition is the inordinate desire of distinction generally, and, consequently, of those things by which distinction is obtained. It consists in the love of greater power, and in the effort to obtain it, than is actually possessed. The desires from which this passion originates are restless, importunate, and, when long indulged, absorb every other feeling, and engross the whole mind. Their sinfulness appears by the dissatisfaction and disobedience which they indicate in regard to God; their pernicious influence on the character and happiness of the individual who indulges them; and the misery of which they are productive in reference to society.

I. Ambition shews dissatisfaction and disobedience in regard to God. He has allotted to all the situation which each occupies, the enjoyment which it yields, and the respect which it secures. Being infinitely wise and good, this arrangement of his wisdom and goodness must be the best. But is it not an impeach-

* Deut. viii. 11—17.

ment of this wisdom, and a disparagement of his goodness, to give way to impatience and discontent, and inordinately to desire the station, the influence, the blessings possessed by others? Is not this, partially at least, to withdraw our allegiance from God, and to assume an independence inconsistent with our character and circumstances as creatures? It was by indulging the wish to become as gods, and to know good and evil, that sin was first introduced into the world; and it is by cherishing inordinate desire, that sin, in every case, originates.

It is unnecessary to say how incompatible this spirit is with the power and the practice of true religion. When it takes possession of the heart, the love and fear of God are excluded; and a course of disobedience to the divine authority, and of rebellion against God, is already entered upon.

II. Let us notice the pernicious influence of ambition on the virtue and happiness of the man who indulges it. The feelings of which it consists, and to which it gives rise, are directly opposed to both. These are dissatisfaction, envy, hatred, selfishness,—feelings which it becomes more difficult to gratify, the more they are cherished.

How can the man who aims at setting himself loose from the direction and government of God,—and every ambitious man does so,—reasonably hope to secure to himself happiness? Is the object of his wishes political power:—though he should obtain all that he now ventures to desire, when he had reached the summit to which his view is now limited, would he not wish to climb the still higher eminence beyond;

and then, after he had ascended, till he had reached the highest pinnacle to which he dared to aspire, should he not feel as dissatisfied as ever, or, rather, more dissatisfied than ever, with the nature and the amount of his enjoyments? What though he rose, not to be a monarch merely, but to be the sovereign of many monarchs, and the possessor of many crowns and many realms, where, or how could his ambition be gratified when he had subdued the world, and when there remained for him no other world to subdue?

Is his ultimate end literary fame :—this seems a nobler object than the former, and one from which, in the estimation of many, greater satisfaction might be derived. But in reality, it is not less criminal, and not less injurious to the happiness of the individual who devotes himself to it. Though he should succeed in acquiring celebrity in the district in which he resides, or even in the kingdom to which he belongs, or through the whole of the civilized world, what is this to the universe? Would he not find, after he had gained the highest literary reputation, that the enjoyment which he had promised to reap from it had eluded him, and that all was vanity and vexation of spirit?

The dissatisfaction of the ambitious man must increase in proportion as he advances in his career, because, however successful, there will be wealth and power which he cannot attain. The king of Israel could not enjoy his kingdom, because he coveted the vineyard of one of his subjects. The captive Haman, whom the Persian Monarch made his prime-minister,

and who had honours, and places, and provinces at his disposal, was discontented and miserable, merely because an obscure Jew refused to pay him homage. "The queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet, that she had prepared, but myself, and to-morrow am I invited unto her, also, with the king. Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai, the Jew, sitting at the king's gate."

III. Let us observe the evils of which ambition is always productive. Within the narrowest limits in which it is cherished, it leads the individual under its control to sacrifice his principle, his peace, and his future and eternal well-being. His heart is away from God; and whatever be the object on which it is fixed, it is the idol to which he gives his homage, and from which he promises to derive his happiness.

When indulged on a more extended scale, how ruinous is its influence on the best interests of mankind! Does it aim at literary honour and distinction:—how often has ambition, in this way, sought its object at the expense of truth; by disparaging, if not denying the character, the government, and the providence of God; by vilifying the revelation which he has given of his will, and of his merciful designs; and by flattering the vanity, and stimulating the sensuality and corruption of man! It is this guilty principle that has filled the world with a species of literature with which it is dangerous to be acquainted, which is the vehicle of infidelity in all its forms of refinement and coarseness, and which addresses itself in sarcasm, in wit, in ridicule, in polluting insinuation, to the passions of the reader. It exists under

the garb of history, of poetry, of philosophy, and of periodical journals ;—assailing the highest interests of man as a moral, a religious, an immortal being.

Does ambition seek political distinction and power :—how destructive has it been in this way in all ages of the world ! Animated and carried along by this principle, to what madness and crime has it led individuals both in ancient and in modern times ! How many thousand human beings have been sacrificed to gratify the ambition of a single Cæsar ! If we beheld hamlets and cities in ruins, the means of subsistence, the domestic enjoyments of multitudes wasted, and war spreading misery and death over the face of that world on which the Creator lavishes his bounty, we should only witness some of the evils which cruel and hard-hearted ambition voluntarily produces.

Nor let us deceive ourselves by thinking that in our humble station we are beyond the reach of its influence. There is no principle that has so wide a control over mankind. Paltry as the object may be which we covet, and to which we give the homage of our heart, it will prove, should we love it to the neglect of God and of our true interests, our certain and everlasting ruin. While many are ever saying, Who will shew us any good—may it be the unfeigned language of our hearts, “ Lord lift thou up upon us the light of thy countenance. Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.”

CHAPTER VII.

FORTITUDE.

ANOTHER of the duties which we owe to ourselves is the cultivation of fortitude ; or that virtue, in the exercise of which we are enabled to conduct ourselves with propriety in regard to the difficulties and dangers of life ; so as neither to betray ourselves by unreasonable fear, nor rashly to put ourselves in the way of evil. It is by fortitude that we can guard from injury those rights which the Creator has given us, and employ them in advancing the great end of our being ; it is by the self-command which proceeds from it that we can prepare to meet the evils which threaten us at a distance ; and it is the same virtue which keeps the mind from sinking under present and unavoidable calamities, and animates it to endure, with patience and resignation to the will of God, what it can neither control nor remove. No man can be truly virtuous who is not in some degree courageous ; since all the evils of life,—pain, and poverty, loss of property, of friends, or of reputation, and all the allurements of unlawful pleasure and profit, give occasion to the exercise of christian fortitude. It is closely connected with self-control, without a considerable share of which, none can be eminently good or great ; and it is nearly allied to contentment, which consists not in divesting ourselves of all inclination for what we do not enjoy at present, but in not

indulging any, without the authority of conscience and of God, and in possessing that tranquil and grateful state of mind which will lead us to give thanks always for all things, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

“ With respect to fortitude, the fourth in the enumeration of cardinal virtues, we may observe that, in every active nature, there is a measure of force required to support their active exertions, and a measure of weakness sufficient to frustrate the purpose of nature, or to betray the confidence that may be placed in the highest measures of skill and of good disposition.

“ Force of mind has a peculiar reference to the state of man, to the difficulties, hardships, and dangers, in the midst of which he is destined to act. In the support of what is honourable and just, he has sometimes occasion to suffer what is inconvenient or painful to his animal frame. In espousing the cause of the just, he may incur the animosity and opposition of the wicked. In performing the offices of beneficence to others, he may encounter with hardship or danger to himself. But this circumstance, which seems to restrain or limit his activity, serves rather to whet his spirit, and increase his ardour in the performance of worthy actions. The difficulty he surmounts becomes an evidence of the disposition which he approves, and actually endears the object for whose sake he exposes himself. Hence it is, that ingenuous minds are confirmed in the love of virtue, in proportion as it becomes a principle of elevation, of heroism, or magnanimity *.”

* Ferguson's *Prin. of Mor. and Pol. Science*, v. ii. p. 42, 44.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE FORMATION OF GOOD HABITS.

THIS is the next of the obligations which we owe to ourselves. It arises from the consideration of man's being susceptible of advancement in moral excellence and in happiness. It has been from a wise and gracious design that he has been rendered capable of forming habits,—and since he is so much the creature of habit, it is of infinite importance that this law of his nature should be turned to good account. Hence, the end of education should be, not merely the communication of knowledge—this is but one of its advantages,—but the training of the mind, the calling forth of good dispositions, and the suppression of the bad, and the formation of those habits that will prepare for the successful discharge of the duties of life.

It is impossible to enumerate here the different habits to the formation of which we should give our attention. But there is one that has so direct an influence on our religious and moral improvement, on the equanimity of our temper, and on the permanence of our happiness, that I cannot forbear mentioning it ;—I mean industry. This is of the greatest value to man in regard to every thing that tends to elevate him in goodness, in greatness, or in happiness. It is industry that has brought forth from the earth its riches, that has extracted from its bosom the materials requisite for accomplishing its own purposes, that has erected on its surface not only comfortable but elegant

habitations, that has procured the luxuries as well as the necessaries of life, that has so multiplied its treasures as to allow a portion of the community to disengage themselves from the labours of the field, and give their attention to the sciences, to the useful and ornamental arts. It is industry that has converted so great a portion of the earth into fruitfulness, that has enabled the same being who once plied in his canoe, fearlessly to circumnavigate the globe, and to make even the great deep bear on its bosom the mighty engines of his power ;—that has raised around us in the beauty and magnificence of architecture, in the unbounded utility of the arts, and in the progress and sublimity of science, so many monuments of the ingenuity and intellectual strength of man, and that sweeps away all the barriers that might hinder him from running the noble career of indefinite improvement.

———— All is the gift of industry,

Whate'er exalts, embellishes, and renders life delightful.

CHAPTER IX.

PRUDENCE, OR A SUTTABLE REGARD TO SELF-HAPPINESS.

This is the next obligation which man owes to himself ; and in connexion with his religious and moral improvement, it is one of very great importance. Its violation is not less criminal than is the breach of those duties which he owes to God, or to man ; and when suffering, as the consequence of its viola-

tion, he himself, and every spectator, pronounce him to be deserving of suffering for his folly and indiscretion. Nor is the remorse merely a sentiment of regret for having missed that happiness which we might have enjoyed. We are dissatisfied, not with our condition merely, but with our conduct; with our having forfeited by our own imprudence what we might have attained. Hence it is that the imprudence that attends the commission of sin is no inconsiderable aggravation; and that its guilt is increased by the circumstance of our hazarding our present and future happiness *.

In this respect man has a duty of the most solemn importance and awful consequence to perform to himself—a duty which the will of his Maker, the voice of conscience, the high and immortal destination of his nature, render imperiously binding. His prospects stretch far beyond the horizon of time, and extend to that futurity which the Creator has assigned to his being and enjoyment. Impressed with the greatness of those objects that have a reference to his nature, not as an animal that has a temporary connexion with this earth, but as an intellectual, moral, spiritual and religious being, capable of advancing in indefinite improvement, and who is to live for ever,—should he not conduct himself and his plans so as to subserve their attainment? Is it wise or prudent in him so egregiously to miscalculate, as to satisfy himself with inferior and fleeting gratifications, to the neglect of the greatest and enduring happiness?

* Stewart's Outlines, p. 280.

If, indeed, man were only to live for the few hours in which he dwells on earth, it would be unnecessary to give his pursuits a higher aim than the enjoyments of this short existence; and his wisdom might consist in acquiring that share of virtue which may be deemed requisite for the full participation of earthly happiness, regardless of every attainment which had an aspect beyond the grave. But man is immortal, endowed with the powers and susceptibilities which shew him to be formed for an endless existence; and the measure of moral and spiritual excellency which he attains now, will have an influence on his happiness in eternity. And being thus destined by his Creator for immortality, and being formed so as to be the instrument of his own eternal happiness or misery, constituted a moral agent and an accountable creature, no sacrifice can be deemed too great, and no efforts too laborious, to attain the approval of his Supreme Governor and Judge.

We are not left to the deductions of reason on this subject;—though even these go far to point out the high destiny and duty of man. A Divine Messenger from heaven has diffused around us the light of heavenly truth; has given us the knowledge of ourselves and of that future existence that awaits us; and has rendered earthly objects comparatively trivial, by extending our view to the grandeur and glory of invisible realities. As the objects, which the darkness of night magnifies, appear in their proper dimensions when the light of the morning shines, so the pursuits of time, and the confines of

eternity, assume a new aspect, when illuminated with the rays of that moral sun which has brought earth and heaven into nearer view, and which points out to man the glory and immortality of his being. It is not till we thus contemplate human nature in the interesting relations which it bears to God and to an endless existence, that we can feel the force and the solemn import of the question, "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" or, "what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

There are, indeed, some situations in which the force of this inquiry is more likely to be felt than in others. When placed in circumstances which largely minister to pride and vanity, the mind is in danger of becoming insensible to the most impressive views of its chief good; and dazzled with the perishable glories that surround it, as if there were no higher sources of enjoyment to which it might aspire, it practically forgets the near approach of their termination, and the value of that state of being into which it is about to enter. But when the enchantment vanishes, and the world begins to recede from the view, and eternity occupies its proper place in the field of vision, in what a different light are the objects of time, and religion, and the soul contemplated, and how novel are the feelings and the sentiments which engage the heart! Go to the house of mourning, surround the bed of sickness and of death, hear the impressive attestations of the value of religion on the confines of eternity, witness the departure of the soul into the unseen world,

exhorting, in its flight to immortality, the objects of its tenderest regard;—when you thus behold, accompanied by the most affecting circumstances, the termination of earthly enjoyment, you have demonstration of the perishable nature of all that has an exclusive reference to this life; and that when the spirit of man relinquishes its present temporary abode, it leaves behind it the attainments acquired in time, and only bears along with it the holiness that fits it for eternity, or the guilt that comes between the sinner and his God.

In this view, then, the duty which man owes to himself in providing for the welfare of his being, is of incalculable importance. He has a prize at stake, the full value of which it is impossible to estimate. The merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. It is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto it. It is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon it; and happy is every one that retaineth it.

All that can be said of the value of the soul,—of its growing capabilities of enjoyment,—of the strength and elevation of its intellectual powers,—and of its destination to advance through an endless existence, only illustrates the importance of true religion to man, and the magnitude of the duty of giving it his immediate, earnest, and chief attention. If the Son of God condescended to veil in human form the attributes of the Divinity, and laid down his life as an atonement for sin, it was no object of trivial moment which he died to accomplish, and

which no sacrifice of inferior efficacy could possibly secure. When we consider the figurative ritual of the Mosaic economy, the long train of prophets, and the splendid series of typical events that preceded the coming of the Redeemer; when we reflect on the glories of his character, the condescension of his personal ministry, the extent and bitterness of his sufferings, and the pain and ignominy of his death: when we are assured that the design of these astonishing acts of power and mercy, was to procure eternal redemption for us; to raise us to higher glories than those which we had lost, and to the possession of far richer gifts than those which we had forfeited, we can require no higher evidence of the unspeakable worth of the soul, and of the importance of that duty which man owes to himself in regard to it.

Thus are all our previous convictions confirmed, of the extent of man's powers, and of the immortality of his nature. This nature has within it the principle of never-dying existence; and the helpless infant, which has just entered into being, is in the possession of a mind whose faculties may rise with Newton to measure the distances of the planetary worlds, and to admire with Paul the height and depth of the love of God that passeth knowledge. But these powers, though capable of indefinite improvement, are worse than useless to their possessor, without moral culture, without the renovating influence of religion, by which they are fitted for their noblest exertions and employments in time

and in eternity. Without this influence and renovation, immortality would only be a dark and dreary waste of existence, a boundless continuation of unenjoyed and unsanctified being, deriving no value from its extent or prolongation, and assuming the aspect of the most dreadful horror, by its eternal seclusion from the Fountain of light, and joy, and blessedness. If we are impressed as we should be with the infinite value of that happiness for which our nature is designed, and which through the Gospel may be attained, we shall consider no effort too great that we may secure it, and all the barriers that come between us and this prize, we shall resolve to surmount. May we be awakened from our slumbers, and not allow the delusions that are so natural to our own hearts, the false opinions of the world, and the insinuating and beguiling influence of sin, to hinder us from embracing the gift of God, which is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord !

The duty which man owes to himself in regard to his spiritual and immortal interests, is the more important, from the consideration that the period allotted him for effectually securing those interests is limited to this fleeting life, and that their loss, therefore, is irreparable. All that gives dignity and glory to man, that connects value with time, and happiness with eternity, is here at stake ; and yet, how few will allow themselves to give the matter that immediate regard which its nature and merits so much demand. Do not multitudes seem to think and act as if they had no guide but their passions, no object

but what terminates in the grave, no supreme authority to which they are accountable, and no heaven of pure felicity in prospect, for which they have any reason to prepare? Look around you, and in place of seeing each discharging the duty which he owes to himself, and impressed with the infinite value of that personal religion which fits erring and guilty man for the presence of his God, you will have too much cause to conclude that many regard its profession as a matter of customary form, or of temporary expediency, and that they do not give half the attention to the moral and spiritual glories of their nature that they willingly yield to the fleeting pursuits and pleasures of this perishable existence.

CHAPTER X.

THE INQUIRY CONCERNING HAPPINESS, CONTINUED.

THE inquiry into the chief good or happiness of man has been a favourite speculation with philosophers in all ages. The interest felt in it in Greece and in Rome gave rise to nearly three hundred different opinions on the subject*. These opinions have generally been reduced to three heads, suggested by the peculiar views of the ancient leading sects. While the followers of Epicurus regarded bodily pleasure and pain as the sole ultimate objects of aversion and desire, those of Zeno placed the supreme good in

* Varro asserts that two hundred and eighty opinions had obtained among philosophers concerning this important subject.

rectitude of conduct, without any reference to the event; and the disciples of Aristotle, while they allowed that virtue is the highest good, they neither considered it as the sole good, nor affected a total indifference to external things.

The existence of this inquiry, as well as the variety of opinions to which it has given rise, is, as it appears to me, no inconsiderable proof that man has wandered from the Fountain of happiness*. Had he been drinking at this fountain, he would not have been urged ever and anon by unsatisfied desire to ask, Who will shew us any good? This cry has proceeded from his sense of want, the conscious absence of real, substantial, and permanent happiness; and evinces that his condition is what revelation describes it to be, alienated from God. The universality of the inquiry can only be considered as the universal acknowledgment of our race, of the unsatisfactory nature of those sources of enjoyment to which it has recourse; and the numerous answers that have been given to this inquiry direct to the fruitless attempt of constituting the mere elements of happiness, many of them casual

- * O Happiness! our being's end and aim!
 Good, pleasure, ease, content, whate'er thy name!
 That something still which prompts the eternal sigh,
 For which we bear to live, or dare to die!
 Which still so near us, still beyond us lies,
 O'erlook'd, seen double, by the fool and wise.
 Plant of celestial seed! if dropt below,
 Say, in what mortal soil thou deign'st to grow?
 Fair opening to some court's propitious shine,
 Or deep with diamonds in the flaming mine
 Twin'd with the wreaths Parnassian laurels yield,
 Or reap'd in iron harvest of the field?
 Where grows,—where grows it not?—If vain our toil,
 We ought to blame the culture, not the soil.

and fleeting, the supreme and ultimate good of man. These answers, beside, proceed on ignorance of the constitution of man as a moral agent, of the designs of the Creator in regard to the ends of his existence, and of the relations in which, as an accountable and immortal being, he stands to God, and to a never-ending eternity.

Were there an individual so circumstanced as to have it in his power to subject to the test of experience all the sources of pleasure which philosophers have represented as constituting the chief and ultimate happiness of man ;—of trying them all in succession, or as united, and of pronouncing his verdict upon each,—we should consider his judgment on the point, if not decisive, at least entitled to our serious consideration. Solomon, the king of Israel, was placed in such circumstances ; with mental capacities of the highest order ; with attainments in physical and moral science that raised him far above the philosophers of his own, or of any other age ; with all the resources of unbounded wealth and power, and with a peaceful reign of forty years, he was able to bring this universal inquiry to the test of experiment. He did so ; he turned aside from the fountain of living waters, and gave himself up to those broken cisterns, from which man so faintly and exclusively draws ; and in his book of Ecclesiastes his experience and decision are recorded.

CHAPTER XI.

WHERE HAPPINESS IS NOT TO BE FOUND.

"VANITY of vanities, saith the preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun." The repetition of the language shews the earnestness of the speaker; it conveys the result of his experience, as well as the dictate of divine authority; and it is to be understood as applicable to all sublunary sources of happiness.

I conceive that a material error in the inquiries of philosophers into the chief good of man, has been an overlooking the actual state of the mind. If the understanding be darkened, and the affections depraved, and the will inconstant, how can any outward circumstances afford permanent happiness? Is it not possible to be surrounded with all the means of gratification, adapted to the various faculties of our nature, and at the same time be incapable of enjoying them? In the midst of a paradise there may be springs of misery in the mind itself, sufficient to give a disrelish for all its fruits, and to present its most beauteous objects under the aspect of deformity; while, on the other hand, to a heart right with God, and right with itself, the sources of enjoyment are continuous and infinite.

Another error connected with this subject is the overlooking the most important part of the constitution of man. We do not consider his nature aright unless

we regard him as a spiritual, intellectual, moral, and sensitive being; and as he is capable of receiving enjoyment in each of these four capacities, his happiness is, of course, incomplete, if any one of them is neglected. The first of these, namely his spiritual character, being the most important, that which is designed to modify and regulate the rest, and which gives to man his highest elevation, any scheme which has his true and abiding happiness in view should mainly include this, and consult the other powers of his nature in subserviency to it. If, indeed, he has been made in the image of God, and fitted and designed to have his happiness in his favour, his service, and in his presence, and that his intellectual and sensitive capacities are to be gratified in accordance with this and in subordination to it, then surely every plan which would aim at securing the chief good of man, by reversing this order and frustrating this design, must be fruitless and vain.

A third error connected with this subject is, that in the numerous attempts that have been made to point out the chief good of man, the mere elements of happiness have been considered as the supreme and ultimate objects of desire and aversion. This is a material error; and yet it has very generally misled mankind. Because we are encompassed with sources of enjoyment, some of them more fixed, others more fleeting, it is, therefore, supposed that one or other of these, or all of them united, must constitute the real happiness of man; while in truth they are only accessories to this happiness, and are not essentially connected with it. Every thing, however excellent in

itself, however fraught with enjoyment, is vanity of vanities, if made a substitute for that which constitutes the great, abiding, and eternal good of man. Nor is it any depreciation of earthly happiness thus to designate it; since it is only rating it according to its true value. It is good in itself; adapted to the purposes for which it was designed; and it has only become vanity by the folly of man, who has attempted, in opposition to the will of God, to derive from it his sole happiness.

The following may be considered as an enumeration of the chief sources of earthly enjoyment.

The exercise of the understanding and the attainments of wisdom, the gratification of the social affections, the pleasures of the senses, the possession of honour and fame, and the command and use of riches.

I. The exercise of the understanding, and the attainments of wisdom, form an element in the happiness of man, but not his chief and abiding good. It is unnecessary to say how great and refined are the pleasures which accompany the exercise of the intellectual faculties, in the pursuit of knowledge, in the discovery of truth, and in cultivating any of the sciences to which the human mind has given existence. They are pleasures not confined to the few who attain the high eminence of enlightening the world by their wisdom, and associating their names with the literary history of our race; but common to all who are capable of learning from their discoveries and labours. They have besides a peculiar value from their saving multitudes from that languor and fretfulness of temper,

which arise from the mere want of occupation as often as from any other cause. The very interest which the mind feels in the objects presented to it by a book or by a science is itself pleasure, and pleasure that continues as long as the objects contemplated or pursued awaken interest. When early impressions are favourable to cheerfulness and virtue, and when the imagination is pure and strong, it is impossible to estimate the sum of enjoyment, which from this source is always at the command of the individual.

But, then, even the exercise of the mind, and the attainments of wisdom, conducive as they are to the happiness, honour, and dignity of man, are, when separated from God and religious and moral excellency, vanity of vanities. When human literature and wisdom are possessed in a high degree, how many circumstances may exist to disturb the tranquillity of the mind. They are insufficient to shew the way in which sin may be pardoned, and peace and reconciliation with God obtained; they cannot exempt from the ills of life; they furnish no comfort and support in death; they form no preparation for appearing before the judgment-seat; and melancholy is the reflection, that their possession is quite compatible with an everlasting exclusion from the abode of pure and glorified spirits. It is on these and on other grounds that the Royal Preacher declares them to be emptiness. "I gave my heart," says he, "to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven.—I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked

cannot be made straight : and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.—In much wisdom is much grief ; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."

This description of the grief and sorrow which accompany the labours of those who make extensive acquirements in human wisdom is not exaggerated, when we consider the fatigue of body and mind with which every acquisition of this kind is made ;—the disappointments and mortifications to which we are liable in this as well as in all other pursuits ;—the scenes of misery, moral and physical, which our knowledge of the world will place before us ;—the want of satisfaction which must be felt in the review of many subjects, arising from the very limited nature of our faculties ;—and above all, the bitter reflection in the hour of death, or the moment the spirit passes beyond it, of talents perverted and abused, and of having lived without God in the world. The pursuit of this, like all earthly good, is attended with labour, and the attainment with uncertainty. The pain issuing from disappointment, or the disquietude which the envy of others occasions us, impairs, if it does not outweigh the pleasure arising from manifold successes. We cannot by the greatest extent of human knowledge bend the course of human affairs to our own wishes ; alter the perverseness of those on whose conduct we depend in some degree for our usefulness and happiness ; divest events of their untowardness ; and ensure the most benevolent plans from being frustrated by unforeseen accidents. Nor can we by any attainments of wisdom make up that which, in every case, is required to

constitute happiness; nor transform this wilderness of sin and sorrow into a paradise in which nothing will be wanting.

II. If the chief and abiding good of man cannot arise from the exercise of the understanding, and the attainment of human wisdom, neither does it proceed from the gratification of the social affections as united with knowledge. Much enjoyment, doubtless, flows to mankind from this source. The love of country and of kindred, and of all the objects that are endeared to our hearts, is pleasurable in its very exercise. This pleasure is enjoyed by all, because the affection which gives rise to it is universally operative. Never does man, till the heart is lost to virtuous feeling, become indifferent to the land which gave him birth, or forsake its shores without regret and emotion. After he has passed many years in other climes, and wandered over the globe, by an affecting species of instinct, he likes to return, and sit for a moment on the borders of his grave, under the trees which overshadowed his youth. Even the conqueror, before whose power the hosts of kingdoms melted away, and who carried the eagle in triumph over territories in which the name of Rome was before unknown, could not view the rocky coasts of his native land unmoved; and he who at Pharsalia contended for the sovereignty of the world, shewed himself true to the emotions of the human heart, as he pensively gazed in his flight on the receding hills of the country from which he had derived his being*.

* See the passages on Patriotism in a former part of this Work.

Nor can we, on this subject, forget the large share of enjoyment which is flowing almost every moment, and to almost every human being, from the pleasures of hope. He who has consulted our happiness in the constitution of our frame has made us prone to anticipate good and good alone. Hope leads us, indeed, to anticipate far higher degrees of happiness than experience ever realizes; but its design in this is, not only to conceal from our view those ills, the knowledge of which would impair our peace without adding to our virtue, but to make us the occasional inhabitants of regions of ideal beauty and loveliness, where the nobler affections of our nature are exercised on objects and scenes by which they are still more refined and exalted. It is hope that gives rapture to the emotions of the mother, as she gazes on her infant, and sees in the bright career which he is to run, all that will constitute him her honour and happiness: but how kindly does Providence conceal from her all the ills of the future, and the thousand entanglements by which her child may be ensnared to vice, and terminate, in the darkness of guilt and crime, that being which she gave him. Anticipating only good, she looks forward to the sunshine of his days, and in her parental fondness forgets that many a cloud may rise to darken them, and that the source from which she promises herself so much happiness may be the occasion of bringing her down with sorrow to the grave.

But while there are enjoyments to a large amount, issuing to man from the exercise of the kindly affections, these cannot form his chief and permanent

good, because they are liable to be interrupted by painful disappointments, and by the operation of affections of a different kind. The cheerfulness which is conducive to the happiness of all, is often counteracted by a peevish and morose temper, and a prevailing discontentedness of mind. Hope, which is one of the most operative of our active principles, and which after a thousand disappointments continues its influence, is often suspended by its opposites, depression and despair; and as if to convince us of the instability of all human happiness, it is the most deserving of the species who are subjected to this calamity. How often do the sensibilities of woman, without any apparent cause, give rise to a feeling in her heart bordering on the poignancy of anguish and despair—a feeling which wastes and undermines the frame, and darkens the scene of enjoyment, which till then had shone around her.

How often are the pleasures of the kindly affections counteracted by bitter disappointment, the painful consciousness that the objects of our friendly regard, of our esteem and love, are base, selfish, and unworthy! The history of our race, besides, gives too ample evidence of the extent to which the malevolent feelings of envy, malice, hatred, jealousy and revenge, have predominated in the human breast, and of the powerful, though pernicious, influence which they have exerted on society. When we consider the crimes of public and private life which have directly proceeded from deliberate malevolence, the long and desolating wars, to which revenge, or some other passion equally base, has given rise, the

propensity to detraction and slander which has been the subject of complaint to moralists in every age, we cannot regard the description as coloured, which characterizes mankind, as serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. Whatever, then, might be said of the pleasures attending the exercise of the kindly affections, as making up the substantial and ultimate good of man, in a world in which there were no affections of a different kind, and in which there was neither sorrow nor disappointment, they are obviously and utterly inadequate in the circumstances in which we are placed.—Neither can the real and abiding happiness of man,—

III. Consist in the pleasures of the senses. This was another of Solomon's experiments in the pursuit of happiness. "I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore, enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity.—I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine; yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom.—I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits: I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I got me men singers, and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.—Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour.—Then I looked on all

the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do : and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun."

He who formed us made us susceptible of receiving pleasure through the medium of the senses ; and to heighten this pleasure, he placed the parents of our race in a paradise where all was beauty to the eye, and music to the ear. The pleasures of this kind, though of an inferior nature, and possessed by us in common with the lower animals, serve as occasional refreshments, when disengaged from higher pursuits, and are illustrative of the goodness of God, who has endowed us with so many and such various capacities of enjoyment. But to allow these in a single instance to detain us from the pursuit of religious and moral excellence, or to occupy the place of the high and enduring happiness of man, would be what the royal preacher has denominated madness and folly. Sensual gratifications are in all cases but of short continuance, and those who make them the professed object of their pursuit, and who are restrained by no considerations of fortune or of conscience, are far from being happy. We observe in them a restless and inextinguishable passion for variety : a great part of their time is necessarily vacant, and therefore irksome ; and with whatever eagerness and expectation they set out, they become fastidious in their choice, languid in their powers of enjoyment, and yet miserable when their pleasure is wanting. " There is a limit at which pleasures of this nature soon arrive, and from which they ever afterwards decline ; and if it is attempted to

compensate for this imperfection by a frequency of repetition, diminution of sensibility, and utter exhaustion of the faculties are the consequence." Who can be conceived more truly degraded and wretched than the voluptuary, who in consequence of the loss of opportunities and the decay of nature, is tormented by desires that can never be gratified, and by the memory of pleasures that can never return?

These considerations, apart from revelation, may teach us, that we consult our real good only when we indulge in such pleasures with great moderation; when we use them according to the designs of the Creator, as accessaries to our enjoyment, and in entire subordination to the great end of our being; and that we should look to other and to higher objects for our true and permanent happiness.

IV. Neither does the abiding happiness of man consist in the possession of honour and fame. This was a source of enjoyment which Solomon amply possessed: for he was wiser than all men; and his fame was in all nations round about. Yet it is of this he says, "As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity. For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool for ever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten."

The love of power, honour, and fame, is resolvable into the desires of superiority and esteem: desires, which because they were originally planted in the human heart, are in a greater or less degree universally operative: but, which, like all the other active

principles of our nature, are, in consequence of human depravity, productive of evil as well as of good. Their gratification, in the pursuit and attainment of power and reputation, is doubtless accompanied with pleasure; and this pleasure is enjoyed in connexion with the superiority which rank and fortune confer; but much more purely and intensely from the nobler superiority of intellectual strength and endowment; the force and vigour of the understanding; the variety and extent of knowledge; and the arts of persuasion and oratory. We naturally desire the esteem of others, and consequently a good reputation, from the pleasure we enjoy in its possession; and minds of a high and generous order are peculiarly susceptible of this pleasurable emotion. To possess the esteem and confidence of any of the wise and good of mankind, is one of the greatest earthly blessings, and which will be undervalued and disregarded by none but those who feel, that they cannot acquire them, because they do not deserve them. “A good name is better, more fragrant and refreshing, than precious ointment.”

But the slightest consideration may satisfy us that even pleasures of this nature are liable to be interrupted by causes over which man has no control; and that he who pursues them as an ultimate end, and as forming his real and chief good, must experience severe disappointments, and have his happiness proportionably impaired. In this case the passion formed is a worldly ambition, the most powerful as well as the most restless and tormenting of all the principles that influence the human heart. When it has the entire

possession, it holds an uncontrolled dominion; but a dominion which is productive of unceasing anxiety and disquietude. Of all the discarded statesmen, it has been said, who for their own ease have studied to get the better of ambition, and to despise those honours which they could no longer arrive at, how few have been able to succeed! The greater part have spent their time in the most listless and insipid indolence, chagrined, at the thoughts of their own insignificance, incapable of being interested in the occupations of private life, without enjoyment, except when they talked of their former greatness, and without satisfaction, except when they were employed in some vain project to recover it.—Of the millions who have toiled for posthumous fame, how few of even their names have been rescued from oblivion; every vestige of themselves and of their works has been swept away by the tide of time, and the memory of them is forgotten. Their love, and their hatred, and their envy is now perished; neither have they any more a portion in any thing that is done under the sun.

Can pleasures such as these, so liable to interruption, so fleeting in duration, and bearing often along with them sources of pain and disquietude, constitute the happiness of man?—Neither can this happiness proceed,—

V. From the command and the use of riches. They were also included in the experiments of Solomon in his pursuit of the chief good. Wealth flowed to his treasury from many tributary states; and all the gratifications which it could purchase he freely enjoyed:

yet he has pronounced them to be unsatisfactory and empty, utterly inadequate to the happiness of man. "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?—As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand."

It was not the design of Solomon to deny that wealth procures many things in themselves desirable, and that, therefore, it ought not to be contemned. He allows that it contributes to our comfort and usefulness, and consequently to our happiness. "Money," says he, "answereth all things." It gives to the man who possesses it, what is far more valuable than personal conveniences, the power of doing good,—of widely diffusing the beneficence of God. But it is so far from being capable of constituting the true happiness of man, that its increase is generally productive of disquietude and trouble. Both it and the enjoyments which it purchases are transitory; they cannot, even when at their height, make their possessor supremely happy; they cannot sooth his spirit when wounded by calumny and reproach; they cannot mitigate the pains of disease; nor can they for a moment arrest the approach of death.

These different sources of human enjoyment which I have enumerated, though in their respective value and importance differing widely from each other, are

from their very nature incapable of constituting the true happiness of fallen and immortal man. They are in themselves fleeting and shortlived ; the capacity of deriving any share of delight from them decays with the decay of life ; and even when this capacity is unimpaired, one such view of the holiness and perfections of the eternal God as would allow the light of truth to strike upon the conscience, would in a moment dissolve the charm, and convert into wormwood and gall the streams of earthly enjoyment.

How often does the light of the Gospel, shining suddenly on the heart and conscience, produce this effect, awakening as if from a dream the man of gaiety and unconcern, who had lived without God, and kindling into the most painful remorse the feelings of fear and shame with which he is overwhelmed ! His eyes are opened to behold the real character of the God in whom he lives and moves,—to see him confronting him in the just authority of that government whose acts he has hitherto unheeded, and in the spirituality of a law, which, though holy, just, and good, he has totally disobeyed. The light which thus breaks in upon the mind, partakes of the omnipotency of the blessed object which it brings to view. It dissolves the charm which had knit the soul to the idols that had usurped dominion over it ; and as if all that gave them interest were in a moment annihilated, it sees the entire nothingness of all the grandeur and honour of the world, and all the pleasures and the treasures of a momentary duration. To which of the springs of inferior enjoyment, at which alone he has hitherto drank, can he go to obtain peace—can he go to pro-

cure the oblivious draught that will remove from his memory what it is misery not to forget, and to save him from the fearful looking-for of judgment which it is still greater misery to anticipate? Has he not yet around him all the sources of happiness, with which, till now, he had been satisfied, to the exclusion of every other; all the wisdom, perhaps, of the profoundest philosophy; all the abundance that had ministered to his enjoyment; all the objects of affection that had called into exercise his benevolent and social feelings; all the fair reputation which the suffrages of his fellow-creatures had willingly given him; all the pleasures arising from the active pursuit of objects, from amusement, and from friendly intercourse; and all the enjoyment which the varying combinations of taste and of fancy can communicate? He has them all; and yet he is miserable, most miserable. He is miserable while he sees nothing in himself corresponding to the moral likeness of God: nothing that can be pleasing to him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; nothing that can meet the entire approbation of His law, when that law receives its right interpretation; nothing to render him meet for dwelling, either on earth or in heaven, in the fellowship of God from whose presence he cannot flee. He feels the bitterness of a wounded spirit, which the attempts of human skill cannot avail to remove. And with an anxiety to which he had been till now a stranger, and which, perhaps, there is nothing in his outward circumstances more likely than before to produce, he asks what he must do to be saved.

If, indeed, the light of the Gospel had not shone on

the mind of the man whose case is here supposed, to unveil objects to his sight in all their truth and sublimity, he would have continued to enjoy his wonted repose. He would have contented himself, amid the gratifications of sense and intellect, without God. He would have gone on to seek distinction and happiness to himself, in running the high career of ambition, or in earning a reputation of benevolence and usefulness, or he would have employed himself in conversing with the ideal forms which people the regions of imaginative feeling and fancy, or humbler and less refined in his views, perhaps, he would have sought and found his enjoyments amid the endearments of objects of affection in domestic life. In the possession of health and of spirits all this may do well enough, and no great want may be felt, and no serious evil may be apprehended. But there is a certain hour, which one would wish all undisturbed and bright, and that is when we die, "when hence we go, ne'er to be seen again!" and where, then, are the sources of gratification with which this individual contented himself while living? where are they the moment after his immortal soul is separated from this fleeting scene for ever? If they have contributed nothing to his fitness to appear before God, and to the well-being of eternity, then must they be pronounced to be altogether different from the true, substantial, and imperishable happiness of man.

CHAPTER XII.

IN WHAT THE TRUE HAPPINESS OF MAN CONSISTS.

“LET us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole honour, interest, privilege, duty, and happiness of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” All that truly concerns man, as a being formed for immortality, is reducible to this: every thing else is accessory, fleeting, perishing. I observe,—

I. That the happiness of man consists in the knowledge, love, fear, and favour of God. Before we can love and fear God, we must know him as he has revealed himself in his word. The object of our adoration and homage must be the true God, and not an imaginary Deity, the mere creation of superstitious dread. The design of the plan of redeeming mercy made known in the Gospel, is to exhibit the character of God in a light calculated to produce penitence and love in the heart of man; and to restore him to true happiness, by restoring him to the favour and friendship of him who is its fountain. To know and to love God in this character of redeeming mercy in which he reveals himself, is to possess happiness; since we are thus put in the possession of that which will relieve our fears, raise our hopes, and give us peace in believing that God is reconciled

to us, and that this God will be our God for ever and ever. If life eternal consist in knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, then such a view of his character and glory as transforms us into his moral image, as produces hatred to sin as the greatest evil, and a supreme delight and satisfaction in God as the chief portion, must form a part of our chief good.

The happiness to which the believer is introduced on earth, though only an earnest of unmingled good in heaven, is a joy unspeakable and full of glory; experienced in communion with God; in a deliverance from the wrath which abideth on the children of disobedience; in the pardon of all sin; in his adoption into the family of the redeemed; and in his being kept by a power that will never fail him. This power, working by the word and the providence of the Saviour, does not, indeed, make him indifferent to all outward things, but renders him superior to them, and forsakes him not till it has fitted up for him, amid the splendours of immortality, a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. If it be happiness to know that all the attributes of God are exercised for him—that all events are working together for his good—that angels are sent forth to minister unto him—that sin will finally and for ever be subdued in him,—and that when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, he has a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens—then does this happiness belong to the disciple of the Lord Jesus.

II. The happiness of man consists not only in

enjoying God in all the manifestations of his presence in Christ, but in obeying him. “Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.” The moment a moral and intelligent being casts off the authority of God, he departs from real good; he becomes guilty, and consequently miserable. Nor is it possible to escape this misery without returning to obedience. Hence the design of the gospel is to recall men from their wanderings, and to bring them to a cordial acquiescence in the will of God, as well as cheerful submission to it. Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works. The purification which he works inwardly by his Spirit is as necessary as the atonement which he made for sin by the sacrifice of himself; nor can there be peace and satisfaction experienced but in connexion with holiness and moral excellence.

When we possess this holiness of our nature arising from the knowledge, faith, and love of God, in Christ Jesus, we have the true happiness of man, even the happiness of heaven, begun: and it is of little consequence what share we possess of the riches, pleasures, and honours that are but of momentary duration. The sources of our great and eternal felicity, are independent of our poverty or wealth, our obscurity or eminence, our learning or our ignorance, our worldly disappointments or successes. Is not our happiness secure in having God for our portion, in enjoying all the blessings of his salvation, in being made meet for the everlasting kingdom which

he has prepared for us, and which we have the hope of so soon entering, in the certainty that no calamities can essentially injure us, that no enemies can prevail against us? Is not he the happy man who can stand on the confines of both worlds with tranquillity, and say, in the confidence of christian hope, "henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me, and not to me only, but unto all them also who love his appearing?" Of what avail to me are all the sources of enjoyment to which man during his perishable existence has recourse; and what are to me all the ills which he fears?—"For I am persuaded that neither life nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

III. The complete happiness of man will be found in the world to come. God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be bad. After surveying all the things done under the sun,—after we have seen the utter incompetency of human wisdom, and of human means,—of wealth, and power, and honour, to give ample and satisfactory enjoyment,—after we have observed, as we suppose, the very unequal distribution of good and evil,—the righteous suffering under poverty and oppression, and manifold calamities, and the wicked largely sharing of the good things of this life,—we are referred for an adjustment of the matter to a judgment to come, in which God will apportion to

every one according to his character and works. It is while looking to this day of unalterable decision, and to the eternity beyond it, that we can emphatically pronounce a life of worldliness, with all its greatness and its enjoyments, to be a life of vanity, and terminating in everlasting misery. In what light will such a life appear on reflection, when the Judge of all shall sit upon his throne, and before him shall be gathered all nations; when the books shall be opened, and he shall adduce all the events illustrative of the principles and character of each?—"Rejoice, then, O young man, in thy youth; and let thine heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

In what light also will a life of faith on the Son of God, of righteousness, and godliness, appear on that great day? It will then be regarded as the only true wisdom, as the only felicity that has survived the wreck of all things, and which will endure through eternity. Then shall the righteous shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father: the light of their full enjoyment shall never more be clouded, while God shall be their glory, and the days of their mourning shall be ended. The vanity and vexation of spirit, necessarily connected with all that is peculiar to the present state, shall no longer exist; whatever is adverse, whatever is defective, whatever is mysterious, in the scene through which we are passing, shall then for ever be removed. "They shall hunger no more neither thirst any more, neither shall the sun light on

them, nor any heat; for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of water; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

Behold the true and the undecaying happiness of man. This is worthy of his warmest affections, and unceasing efforts. Unlike the enjoyments to which he clings in youth, in manhood, and in old age, which desert him in the hour of dissolution, and leave him to those days of darkness which shall be many, the very hope of this will sustain him in affliction, irradiate the gloom of death, and make him feel the substantiality of the life and immortality beyond. This hope outweighs in blessedness all the ills of the world, and will make him feel under them, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall afterwards be revealed in us. It is in the pursuit of this that he is to strive to enter in at the strait gate—to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness,—to believe the gospel, and to obey it—and to deny himself daily, and take up his cross, and follow the Redeemer. This is a portion which will not disappoint his expectations, which he may freely obtain, whatever may be his rank or allotments in the world, which will never occasion him vexation or sorrow, and which will increase in its eternal enjoyment. To possess this is to be wise, and safe, and happy, in time and in eternity. "Happy is the man that findeth this wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

In the pursuit of this true happiness, are we to consider all the sources of earthly enjoyment as of

no value? By no means. If you are learned, enjoy the satisfaction of learning; or beloved, refrain not from the delights of social and friendly affection; or honoured, do nothing to lower the influence of your name and reputation; or rich, extract from wealth, by temperately participating in its pleasures, and by doing good to others, all the enjoyment which it can yield. Use the world; but use it in entire subordination to the love, and fear, and commandments of God; use it in subserviency to the high, the chief, the only true happiness of man; use it in no way as your portion, but as a means of promoting your convenience while travelling through the desert to the home of your Father. “This I say, brethren; the time is short. It remaineth that they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy as though they possessed not; and they that use this world as not abusing it. For the fashion of this world passeth away.”

“Godliness, with contentment, is great gain. For, we brought nothing with us into this world, and, it is certain, can carry nothing out. And, having food and raiment, let us therewith be content. For they that will be rich, fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who

giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life*."

The Stoics in vain endeavoured to raise men to this temper, by teaching them that pain or ease, want or affluence, reproach or honour, were things in themselves perfectly indifferent; but as in this they contradicted the natural apprehensions and necessary feelings of mankind, they could not thoroughly believe themselves, nor be credited by others. Brutus, a zealous Stoic, found these principles fail, under the pressure of a heavy calamity, fled to self-murder for relief, and dying, exclaimed, as some report, on virtue as an empty name. Whereas revelation raises us above the injurious influence of external goods or evils, not by telling us they are things wholly indifferent; but by assuring us that God, who knows their nature, will direct them for our good; and by teaching us so to bear or improve either, as to make them instrumental in heightening our virtue here, and our happiness hereafter†.

* 1 Tim. vii. 6, 7, and 17, 18, 19. † Grove's Mor. Phil. vol. ii. p. 506.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DIVINE PROCEDURE TOWARDS MAN SHEWS IN WHAT HIS HAPPINESS CONSISTS.

WHEN man had ceased to regard it as a privilege to seek his enjoyment in the favour and friendship of God, he might justly have been left to that misery which he had chosen, and to that "everlasting destruction" from the divine presence which his iniquity deserved. But, in infinite mercy, God devised a method according to which his character should be revealed in a light calculated deeply to affect the heart of man, and to win it back to the obedience of his law.

By this plan it was designed to vindicate the holiness and justice of the divine government, and to give the most touching display of the loving-kindness of God. These ends it has fully secured; so that glory is given to God in the highest, peace is proclaimed on earth, and good will to the children of men. By this means the friendship and fellowship with God which our first parents enjoyed in a state of innocency are gained by the penitent; so that, in Christ Jesus, He is delivered from condemnation, and has a participation in the benefits and privileges of his purchase. By this means he is restored to happiness by being restored to peace with him who is its fountain. He beholds the divine character and perfections through a medium that powerfully affects him,—in a way that produces hatred to sin as the greatest evil,

and a conviction of the entire emptiness and vanity of every portion in which God does not form the chief part, and an earnest desire to be conformed in heart and in life to the will of his heavenly Father.

We cannot tell all the happiness to which he is introduced on earth, by having the favour and love of God turned towards him. Having been thoroughly awakened to a sense of his wretchedness while at a distance from his Father, and knowing from the bitterness of his experience, that every prospect of good in which God is not contemplated, however fair, is most surely false, he values every gift only as it is an expression of the good will of the divine Giver, and as it is related to the Fountain of happiness. He is introduced into a new world,—into regions of unconfined beauty and loveliness, where the sunshine is scarcely ever darkened, and the fruits of which confer immortal blessedness. He thus forms a just estimate of the real importance of time, and of the far greater importance of eternity, and values all good, not according to its appearance, but to its real qualities and duration. The influence of the Cross, in changing his heart and views, gives him a taste for nobler food than that with which he was wont to content himself, and ever prompts him to seek his happiness in the conscious enjoyment of the favour and friendship of God.

This favour he possesses—he has its expressions in that communion with himself which God affords him,—in a deliverance from the wrath which abideth on the children of disobedience,—in the pardon of sin—and in the spirit of adoption and of filial confidence in God with which he is endued. The divine

grace sustains him in distress and in danger, and forsakes him not till it has prepared for him a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. There he shall see God, and be admitted into those blissful mansions where there is fulness of joy, and to God's right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore. There, the sun of his growing enjoyment shall never decline, neither shall the moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be to him an everlasting light, and the days of his mourning shall be ended.

BOOK VII.

OF RELATIVE DUTIES WHICH RESULT FROM THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SEXES.

Though every moral obligation may be considered as included in the common division, according to which we treat of our duties to God, to our fellow-creatures, and to ourselves; yet, on account of the prominent place which they should hold in our view, and in respect of their important consequences in reference to society, I prefer discussing the duties of the marriage relation; and the crimes opposed to them, under a separate head.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE ORIGIN OF MARRIAGE.

THE institution of marriage naturally takes its rise from the principles implanted in human nature, and the circumstances in which mankind are placed. They are led to form this union by that tendency of their nature which is common to them with the lower animals, to continue the species; but more especially, by the esteem of a beloved object; affection to children; and a regard to their own virtue and happiness. Though these propensities would lead to this relation, they might not lead to it universally; at

least, so as to be productive of all the advantages which it is designed to secure to the parties concerned, and to their offspring.

Hence the importance of a divine and definite law on the subject; the nature of which we learn from Revelation. We might, indeed, infer, from the constitution and circumstances of the parents of the human race, that this institution was the subject of special enactment; and that as God made them "male and female," he intended they should live together as husband and wife.

But in the following passage the origin of marriage is explicitly stated by our Lord: "the Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered, and said unto them, have ye not read, that He, which made them at the beginning, made them male and female; and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let no man put asunder *."

This is the language of Christ; and the law which it contains, is, of course, designed for the human race; that is, it respects the whole posterity of Adam and Eve alike. They who are united to each other by the ties of marriage, are joined together by the ordinance of God, and are not to be "put asunder" by man. The marriage ceremony may vary in different ages and countries, being modified by the law of the land; but the institution itself is of divine appointment.

* Matt. xix. 3—6.

CHAPTER II.

THE NATURE OF THIS INSTITUTION, AND THE OBLIGATIONS
IMPLIED IN IT.

IN forming this union, man “leaves,” to use the words of the institution, “father and mother, and cleaves to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh.” Hence an union is created, the most intimate and endearing that can exist on earth; and which is to continue during the lives of the parties concerned. The tender affection from which it takes its rise, and which is so necessary to render it a source of happiness, has been alluded to in a former part of this work.

This union is formed by a vow or contract, in which God is appealed to, and which appears to me to have all the solemnity and obligation of an oath. However much the mere ceremony may vary with particular circumstances, the husband in all cases promises love, fidelity, and support, to his wife; and the wife, affection, honour, and obedience to her husband. The stipulation of personal fidelity is reciprocal.

Though an equality may prevail in the sexes as to original intellectual endowments, and though in many instances there be a manifest superiority of understanding in the woman, yet, as the designs of the marriage institution render it necessary that there should be a determining authority somewhere, nature points out the propriety of lodging it in the husband. “Since from various circumstances, natural and fac-

titious, man is everywhere in possession of physical and political superiority,—since his education is usually less imperfect, and since the charge of providing for the support of the family, in almost every instance, belongs to him—it is surely, from all these circumstances, fit, upon the whole, that if the power of decision, in doubtful matters, should be given to one rather than the other, it should be with the man that it is to rest.” The divine law has made the decision. “Let the wife be subject to her own husband in every thing. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.”

Though, according to the divine law, the presiding authority rests with the husband, this law enjoins him to exercise it with the most affectionate tenderness: “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.”—“In the general circumstances of conjugal life there should be absolute equality, because, where love should be equal, there should be that equal desire of conferring happiness which is implied in equality of love; and he, who from the mere wish of gratifying his feeling of superiority, can wilfully thwart a wish of her whose wishes—where they do not lead to any moral or prudential impropriety—should be to him like his own, or even dearer than his own, if they did not truly become his wishes; when known to be hers,—would deserve no slight punishment, as the violator of conjugal obligation, if he were not almost sufficiently punished in the very want of that better affection, the delightful feeling

of which would have saved him from his tyranny of power*."

The person to whom the conjugal duties are to be discharged is to be the object of choice; to whom affection and esteem leads us to give the preference; and whose happiness we become bound by the most tender ties to promote. This is implied in the marriage vow; and should well be considered before this vow is made. Nor can it be any justification of the carelessness of either party toward the other, that they cease to love, because they discover that the object is unworthy of continued affection. This discovery, if indeed, it be well founded, ought to have been made, and would have been made, had they been careful to consider who it was with whom they were about to enter into the most solemn engagements,—before they had appealed to Heaven to witness their vows. The plea, after this appeal, is inadmissible; and to offer it is nothing less than "to plead one crime as the justification of another."

It is indeed of infinite importance to the happiness of the married life, and especially to the happiness of woman, that she should only engage where love is felt. In acting otherwise she not only violates truth, but as the punishment, sacrifices her happiness. She may secure, in exchange, wealth, and equipage, and distinctions, in consigning her person to him for whom she has no affection; but she misses that happiness which Providence has designed the married life to be the means of communicating.

If the affection which gives rise to the conjugal

* Brown's Lect. on Mor. Phil. vol. iv. p. 120.

union is maintained, the discharge of the duties involved in this relation will be a source of delight. This will prompt the wedded pair to anticipate each other's wishes, to bear each other's burdens, and to think of whatever may contribute to each other's happiness; as time advances, and those attractions of form, which perhaps first awakened the tender passion, disappear, they find that they "are lovers still." With mutual love, there will be mutual fidelity, and the zealous performance of all the duties in regard to each other, which love can suggest as devolving on those who are united by such a close and endearing bond.

CHAPTER III.

THE DESIGNS OF THIS INSTITUTION.

THE importance of the marriage institution in the view of the divine Legislator, appears from his having made it the subject of one of the commands of the decalogue, and rendered its violation, under the Jewish economy, punishable by death. In the New Testament, special judgments are denounced against whoremongers and adulterers; and it is declared that "they shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone." The utility of this institution to the virtue and happiness of mankind, will be manifest from the following considerations.

I. The comfort of the wedded pair. This is one of the reasons assigned for the origin of the institution.

“ The Lord God said, it is not good that the man should be alone ; I will make him a help meet for him.” This end, unquestionably, and more especially in regard to the female sex, has been attained to an incalculable extent. Amid the manifold sorrows of this chequered scene, enjoyment has flowed from this source to gladden the families of mankind.

That there have been, and still are, unhappy marriages, no one will deny, who is acquainted with human nature, and the state of the world. Vice will not suffer those who continue in its practice to enjoy comfort and tranquillity in any situation. When persons form the matrimonial union, whose views, principles, and tempers, are wholly unsuited, is it surprising that their connexion should be the occasion of disappointment and misery ? or, when their chief objects in marriage are, alliance to a powerful family, the acquiring or repairing of fortune, the obtaining of rank, the gratification of ambition, or avarice,—can it be wondered that the happiness which was not sought, is not realized ? marriage was not designed to be a source of comfort in such cases. It cannot reverse the fixed ordinations of Providence ; and give to ignorance the pleasures of knowledge, to sordid meanness those of generosity, or to vice those of virtue.

But the history of mankind will bear us out in the affirmation, that where there exists an adaptation in the views and dispositions,—where the union proceeds from previous affection and esteem, and not from paltry and selfish considerations, this institution is pre-eminently calculated to be to both parties a source of continual comfort.

II. It is designed for the preservation and education of children. That these ends can be attained only by marriage, is a position which it is scarcely necessary to prove, since there are few, if any, by whom it is denied. The helplessness, the ailments, the wants of children, and their peculiar liability to danger, require those constant attentions which the parental affections alone will unweariedly bestow—parental affections, such as are awakened and cherished by wedded love. In these affections, and nowhere else, has nature made ample provision for the necessities of the human race, while advancing from infancy to manhood. Animated by these, parents in spite of filial ingratitude and even profligacy, and notwithstanding incessant anxiety and toil, persevere in discharging the ministry which Heaven has assigned to them.

But for this ministry, which is the fruit of marriage, who would adequately care for human beings during the helpless years of infancy and childhood? As it is, and with all the aid which affection and medicine can supply, vast numbers die in the course of these years. Abolish marriage, and annihilate the affection to children which it renders sacred, and to which it gives scope, and multitudes would be left to perish as soon as they were born, and few would ever reach to manhood.

The education of children is nearly of as great importance as their preservation. By education, I mean, not merely the communication of knowledge, but the formation of those dispositions, habits, and manners, which characterize man in civilized society. Education, in this acceptation of the term, is a tedious and laborious process; and certainly would not be undertaken

nor conducted but by the wedded heads of families, prompted as they are to the task by those affections which God has given them. It is by the instruction which they both give and provide for them, it is by the principles which from time to time they instil into the mind, and by the example which they set before them, that children are trained to virtue, civility, industry, and usefulness.

Industry and economy, especially, are the result of early habit. These are not natural to man, however necessary they may be to his comfortable subsistence. Savages are idle and wasteful, and suffer much from the evils which idleness and waste occasion. It is only in families, and where some degree of civilization has been attained, that parents exercise the watchfulness and unremitting attention requisite to the training of children to habits of industry and economy: and without these habits, science, arts, comfortable dwelling-places, and all that improves, embellishes, and renders life delightful, would have no existence.

A most important part of education is the habit of subordination to lawful authority. One design of Providence in dividing mankind into families is, to accustom them from the dawn of their being to obedience; and thus to prepare them for rendering that submission to "the Powers that be" which is so necessary to the peace, order, and happiness of the world. To the parental authority, obedience is secured, not merely by the love and tenderness which accompany it, but by the filial affections which Providence has placed in the hearts of children. Obedience becomes delightful because it is rendered, not from constraint, but will-

ingly, not from servile fear, but from filial love. A habit of subordination to just authority is thus imperceptibly formed, which human beings carry with them from the family to the world, and which if not attained in early life, and under the direction of parents, could never be attained at all.

If it were never formed, and by the means and the multitudes that Heaven employs in its formation, what would be the consequence? Could mankind be taught submission by the enactments of the legislature, the power of the magistrate, the hope of reward, or the fear of punishments? Having grown to manhood without government, they could never, without a miracle, be governed at all. It is unnecessary to say, that in such a state of things the earth would present a scene of anarchy, desolation, and destruction.

III. Marriage is the source of the gentle affections and natural relations which unite mankind. To these our attention has already been directed; and it is sufficient here to remark, that the benevolence of the human mind, and the rudiments of all that is lovely in human character, are very much owing to the family union. This is the spring of the humanity and philanthropy which render the intercourse of mankind a blessing. It is from this source that the parental, the conjugal, the filial, the fraternal, and other useful relations, take their rise; and which are the occasion of the greater share, not merely of the happiness, but of the virtue of the human race.

Such are some of the designs of the institution of marriage; the inestimable benefits which it confers; and the numerous consequences which flow from it.

Need it surprise us that an ordinance of such importance to the comfort, the moral improvement, and even the existence of mankind, should have been made the subject of one of the precepts in the decalogue, and that its violators should be classed with the most atrocious criminals, and threatened with the severest punishment?

CHAPTER IV.

FORNICATION.

THIS crime is forbidden in the decalogue, and peremptorily condemned in several parts of Scripture. Its commission tends to discourage and prevent marriage, and, consequently, to prevent the existence of those blessings of which marriage, by the divine wisdom, is productive. This is its direct tendency; and it is therefore to be viewed as an attack on the progressive virtue and happiness of the species. “The libertine may not be conscious that his irregularities hinder his own marriage, from which he is deterred, he may allege, by different considerations; much less does he perceive how his indulgences can hinder other men from marrying; but what will he say would be the consequence, if the same licentiousness were universal; or what should hinder its becoming universal, if it be innocent or allowable in him?”

It necessarily involves others in vice, and often in inconceivable misery. The sense of infamy occa-

sioned in the devoted victim is sometimes felt to be insupportable. This is exemplified by her overcoming one of the strongest feelings in the bosom of woman,—affection to her sucking child, compassion to the son of her womb,—and deserting, nay, even destroying her own offspring. How bitter the agony of wretchedness and despair that could suggest such a thought to the heart of a mother, that could lead her to entertain it, and to carry it into execution!

But the career of crime and misery, in many cases, only begins here. The polluted, degraded, outcast female, who perhaps has been betrayed into sin, and whose relations frown upon her, has recourse to prostitution as her only means of subsistence, and enters one of those receptacles of infamy from which mercy, virtue, and happiness are for ever shut out. Here, in the absence of all the means of reformation, and associated with the worst of the species, she bids a final adieu to the house, the word, the ordinances, and the salvation of God. What must be *his* guilt by whom she was seduced from the path of virtue, and who is the author of her pollution, degradation, misery, and perdition! Such, however, is the guilt, and, in many instances, the misery to which every act of fornication contributes.

This crime, besides, leads to a repetition, and a repetition is subversive of all moral principle. This is a fact which has been observed by every one who has made his fellow-creatures the subject of his observation and reflection. “However it be accounted for,” says Paley, “the criminal commerce of the sexes corrupts and depraves the mind, and moral character

more than any single species of vice whatsoever. That ready perception of guilt, that prompt and decisive resolution against it, which constitutes a virtuous character, is seldom found in persons addicted to these indulgences. They prepare an easy admission for every sin that seeks it; are, in low life, usually the first stage in men's progress to the most desperate villanies; and, in high life, to that lamented dissoluteness of principle, which manifests itself in a profligacy of public conduct, and a contempt of the obligations of religion and of moral probity. Add to this, that habits of libertinism incapacitate and indispose the mind for all intellectual, moral, and religious pleasures*."

The fact is incontrovertible; and when we consider the polluting influence of the crime itself, and the debasing tendency of the means usually employed in its accomplishment, we can, without much difficulty, account for it. Not only is secrecy, in the greater number of cases, deemed necessary, but the perpetrators are brought into the society of vicious persons, and are led to employ deceit and fraud in the gratification of their licentious appetites. Hence, the persons over whom this wickedness acquires ascendancy become thoroughly unprincipled, impious, blasphemers, treacherous, drunken, and ready for every crime.

To those who are yet on the threshold of this course, we would say, Return. Advance but a little further, and your recovery is hopeless. None (comparatively none) who fully set out on this way of destruction turn again, neither take they hold of the

* Mor. Phil. vol. i. p. 292

paths of life. “Behold now is your accepted time, and *now* is the day of your salvation.”

The species of cohabitation referred to by Paley, though distinguishable from a vagrant concubinage, is not sanctioned by marriage, and therefore, the persons who practise it live in continual fornication. If, as has been alleged, in its defence, the situation of the parties be the same thing as marriage, why do they not marry? If the man chooses this situation because he has it in his power to dismiss the woman at his pleasure, or to retain her in a state of humiliation and dependence inconsistent with the rights which marriage would confer upon her, it is not the same thing. It is not at any rate the same thing to the children. The cohabitation of men and women, without having previously undertaken the obligations, and conferred the mutual rights of marriage, is immoral, because it is opposed to the injunctions of Scripture, and because it not only discourages and tends to prevent marriage, and the blessings of which marriage is productive, but is the source of the most pernicious consequences.

In proportion to the criminality of fornication should be our vigilance in guarding against those temptations which lead to it. For this purpose let us live under the habitual conviction that the Scriptures prohibit,—

I. All impurity of thought. “He that looketh on a woman, to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.”—“Out of the heart,” says our Saviour, “proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemies; these are the things which defile a man.” When the heart is preserved with all diligence, the conversation

and the life will be pure ; but when the imagination is licentious, the whole man is contaminated. It is melancholy to think of the numberless methods by which, in these degenerate times, impure thoughts are suggested to the mind ; and by which unthinking youth are peculiarly exposed to dangers.

II. Impurity of words is also forbidden. They are at once the expression of an improper state of heart, and the means of awakening impure thoughts and desires. Their use is degrading to us as rational beings, and altogether unsuited to our character as christians. “ But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints ; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient.”—On earth, what object is there more degraded, more to be abhorred, than the man who from inbred pollution of heart, diffuses, through the medium of obscene language, a corrupting influence around him ?

III. It is scarcely necessary to add, that every approach to licentiousness of conduct is to be guarded against as criminal. “ Irregularity, as has been truly remarked, has no limits ; one excess draws on another ;—the most easy, therefore, as well as the most excellent way of being virtuous, is to be so entirely.” We ought, therefore, in this, as in everything else, to “ abstain from all appearance of evil.”

CHAPTER V.

SEDUCTION.

THIS is a robbery of the most atrocious description, committed by a series of heartless villanies, and followed by irreparable injury. To the victim of this injury it is productive of the inconceivable wretchedness mentioned in the former chapter. Deprived of what is to all a source of comfort, reputation, she is covered with infamy; and if her maintenance depend upon her character, she loses her employment, and becomes a forlorn outcast, without food and raiment. What adds to the enormity of this crime is, that it is usually succeeded by a total subversion of moral principle, and, consequently, by the perdition of the hapless being seduced. Who but the Judge of all the earth, can estimate the desert of the authors of mischief so irretrievable?

The victim of this mischief may have been the pride of her family, the object of her parents' fondness and delight, who they hoped would be the honour and happiness of their declining years. Till now innocence and peace smiled on their dwelling-place. But as though their felicity had been viewed by a malignant eye, the tempter, by falsehoods and artifices, has succeeded in its destruction, and has overwhelmed the members of a virtuous household in the most agonizing shame and sorrow. Let every parent ask, what would be his feelings, if the dis-

honour supposed were inflicted on a beloved child ; and let every brother say, in what way he could estimate the injury did it relate to a sister.

“ If it be justly considered, as adding tenfold horror to the crime of murder, that he on whom death was inflicted, was a friend and benefactor of the assassin, and forgave the deadly blow, even while he recognised the arm from which it came,—what weight of guilt does the very love, which, even after ruin, still lingers in her gentle heart that was betrayed, add to the atrocious selfishness of him who rejoiced to perceive the tenderness of love, only as a proof that his artifices had not been wasted ; who, in abandoning her afterwards to all her misery, regretted only the difficulty which he might have in shaking off a love so obstinate.

“ Let us imagine, then, gathered into one terrible moment—the distraction of parents,—the tears of sisters,—the shame and remorse of the frail outcast ; or perhaps, in the dreadful progress of depravation of what was shame and remorse—a wild excess of guilt, that seeks only to forget the past, and that scarcely knows, in the distraction of many acquired vices, what it is which constitutes at the moment the anguish which it feels—if all this combination of miseries could be made visible, as it were, to the very eyes of the seducer, and the instant production of it were to depend on a single word of renewed solicitation on his part—what passion, that calls itself love in any human breast, can we conceive to be unmoved by such a sight, as to utter calmly a word so destructive ? And if a single moment of the miserable result be so

dreadful to be contemplated, how much more terrible is it, when regarded as the misery of years—of years that, after their course of wretchedness is finished, consign to immortality a spirit, that but for the guilt of him who rendered it what it is, might have looked back upon the earth, with the calm pleasure of those who turn their eyes on a scene which their acts of virtue have rendered delightful; and quit it only for scenes which they are to render delightful, by the continuance of similar acts, or wishes of virtue*.”

Why there should be no punishment provided for a crime productive of such complicated misery, beyond a pecuniary satisfaction to the injured family, it belongs not to me to say.

CHAPTER VI.

ADULTERY.

IN addition to seduction, there is in this crime an injury inflicted on a third person, in the violation of stipulated rights. The man who solicits the chastity of a married woman, obtains, should he succeed, by fraudulent means, that affection which belongs to her husband. This success involves the gross infringement of the marriage vows and engagements; and must expose him to the severe displeasure of that God whose omniscience was appealed to when they were made.

* Brown's Lectures on Mor. Phil. vol. iv. p. 236.

What greater injury can be inflicted on the innocent party? The crime carries sorrow and infamy to the bosom of a happy, and before the tempter plied his artifices, an united family. The afflicted husband beholds her whose happiness was dearer to him than his own, who is the mother of his children, corrupted by villany, seduced from virtue, dishonoured and ruined. That bosom on which he had so entirely reposed his confidence has deceived him. He feels himself to be widowed and desolate: he sees his children deserted and motherless; he engages in his necessary avocations spiritless and almost broken-hearted; and passes the remainder of his course to the tomb without enjoyment, and without hope.

The injury done to the children by this crime is of the utmost magnitude. They are robbed of maternal care and affection; of instruction and government; of the holy and efficacious influence of a mother's example; of all the happiness which flows from her presence, and of the numberless tendernesses which her presence suggests.

It cannot surprise us that, under the Jewish law, a crime which violates the most sacred rights, and which is productive of so much misery, should be followed with a capital punishment to both the parties concerned. "Even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death *." In the christian Scriptures it is declared that God will visit the adulterer with adequate punishment.—"Marriage is honourable in

* Levit. xx. 10.

all, and the bed undefiled ; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge *."

That this declaration will receive its fulfilment, no one will doubt who believes in the Divine authority of the Book which contains it. He who has an eternity in which to punish the workers of iniquity cannot want opportunities of exercising his punitive justice.

It is scarcely necessary to remark, that they in some measure participate in the guilt of the adulterer, whose behaviour is designed to captivate the affections of a married woman. Though the crime is not completed, its consequences, in this way, may be felt, in the interruption of the peace of a family.

CHAPTER VII.

POLYGAMY.

It may be proved, both from Scripture and reason, that polygamy is unlawful and inexpedient.

I. Let us attend to the testimony of Scripture. On two occasions, at the beginning of the world, and immediately after the flood, when it was necessary to people the world, God assigned one woman to one man. From the words of Christ, quoted in a former chapter, we learn that a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh. It is perfectly clear from this language, that in the ordinance of marriage, as

* Heb. xiii. 4.

instituted by God, there are two, and only two, joined together.

The same truth is elsewhere taught by our Lord, when answering the inquiry of the Pharisees regarding the law of divorce ; “ I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, commiteth adultery ; and whoso marrieth her who is put away doth commit adultery *.” Here it is declared that the man who puts away his wife, and marries another, is an adulterer ;—a declaration which establishes the truth of the position, that whosoever marries a second wife, while the first is living, is guilty of adultery.

All the passages of the New Testament which allude to marriage, suppose it to signify the union of one man with one woman. “ Know ye not,” says the Apostle Paul, “ brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth ? For the woman which hath an husband, is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth ; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband ; so then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress †.”—“ Let every man,” says the same Apostle elsewhere, “ have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.”

There are, indeed, several instances of polygamy mentioned in the Old Testament, as there are *there* recorded the deviations from duty, as well as the virtues, of the persons alluded to ; but they receive no counte-

* Matt. xix. 3—11.

† Rom. vii. 1—4.

nance from the authority of God, and were sources of vexation and sorrow, both to parents and children.

II. Let us now listen to the testimony of nature and of reason on the subject. The equality, or, rather, the very near approximation to equality, in the number of males and females born into the world, is a plain indication that it is the will of God, that one woman should be the wife of one husband: "For, if to one man be allowed an exclusive right to five or more women, four or more men must be deprived of the exclusive possession of any; which could never be the order intended."

Polygamy is not more friendly to population than the existing arrangement. It is maintained, by some respectable writers, that it is less so; and they adduce in evidence, the creation of a single pair to replenish the world. They infer from this fact, that the allotment of one woman to one man is more favourable to population than a plurality of wives. Indeed, the fact stated in the former paragraph, namely, the equality in the number of males and females who grow to maturity, renders it impossible that polygamy should increase the population. For the question is not, as Paley remarks, whether one man will have more children by five or more wives than one; but whether these five wives would not bear the same or a greater number of children to five separate husbands.

Polygamy, besides, tends to frustrate, by the evils which it produces, the designs of marriage. It introduces the most unseemly dissensions into families, which impair the happiness of parents, and lead to a neglect of the education of children. The female sex,

who by Christianity are admitted to equal rights with the males in the institution of marriage, are degraded by polygamy into instruments of mere physical pleasure. There would thus, on the supposition of the adoption of this system, be continual injustice done to the half of the human race—a circumstance which of itself proves that it is at variance with the will of God.

We must, therefore, regard the law which prohibits polygamy in every christian country as just. In Sweden it is punished with death. In England, besides the nullity of the second marriage, it subjects the offender to transportation for the first offence, and to capital punishment for the second*.

CHAPTER VIII.

DIVORCE.

By divorce, we understand the dissolution of the marriage-contract. This was allowed by some ancient nations, and is allowed by some nations at the present day, by the act, and at the will of the husband. Such a permission is incongruous with scripture and with

* “ Polygamy can never be endured under any rational civil establishment, whatever specious reasons may be urged for it by the eastern nations, the fallaciousness of which has been fully proved by many sensible writers. It is therefore punished by the laws both of ancient and modern Sweden with death. And with us in England it is enacted by statute, 1 Jac. I. c. ii., that if any person being married, do afterwards marry again, the former husband or wife being alive, it is felony ; but within the benefit of Clergy. The first wife, in this case, shall not be admitted as a witness against her husband, because she is the true wife ; but the second may, for she is indeed no wife at all : and so *vice versâ*, of a second husband.”—Blackstone’s Commentaries on the Laws of England, vol. i. p. 136.

the law of nature, both of which establish the position that divorces are unlawful, except in cases of incontinence.

I. Let us attend to the testimony of Scripture on this subject. We have recorded in the New Testament the answer which our Lord gave to the Pharisees on this very point. "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read that He which made them at the beginning, made them male and female; and said, for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain but one flesh. What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, why did Moses, then, command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away, doth commit adultery."

From these words of our Lord, it is clearly proved, in the first place, that marriage is a divine institution, and that therefore the engagements made in it are irrevocable by man. The parties joined together are united according to God's authority, and man has no judicial power to put them asunder without permission from the Supreme Legislator.

It is further evident, in the second place, from the

language of our Lord, that a divorce cannot take place, except in the case of incontinence, without involving the parties, and their consequent marriages, in guilt. The man who divorces his wife and marries another, commits adultery ; and the man who marries the divorced wife is also an adulterer. If the effect of a divorce be to allow the parties whose marriage contract is thereby dissolved lawfully to marry, it is obvious that there never can be a divorce according to the divine law, except in the case of the previous adultery of the husband or wife.

It is maintained, and as it appears to me, on the best grounds, that the Apostle Paul teaches the same doctrine in the following passage. "Unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart, or be separated from her husband : but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband : and let not the husband put away his wife. But to the rest ;" that, to those who were placed in peculiar circumstances by the introduction of christianity, and whose case had not existed when Christ gave the command referred to—"But to the rest I command, not the Lord : if any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband ; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy. But if the unbelieving depart, let him

depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases : but God hath called us to peace *."

I entirely concur with Dr. Dwight, in opposition to the greater number of commentators, in thinking that the deserted husband or wife, supposed in this passage, was bound to remain unmarried ; or, rather, it was not lawful for her or him to marry another person. I consider the Apostle as reiterating the very doctrine which had been previously taught by his Divine Master regarding marriage.

II. Reason goes a great way in establishing the same doctrine, by shewing its importance to the usefulness and stability of the marriage institution. This is indeed so evident, that all allow that the Scriptures forbid a divorce, except for incontinence, or something equivalent. Among the things which are considered as equivalent to adultery are, obstinate desertion, attempts upon life, outrageous cruelty, incurable madness, and perhaps personal imbecility.

As no such things are mentioned by the Divine Lawgiver, we are not warranted to make any such additions to the law which he has given us. The evils just mentioned are, indeed, great ; but since Christ takes no notice of them, when declaring what it is that constitutes a cause of divorce, they cannot justly be allowed to have the same effect, in this respect, as adultery. They are good grounds for a separation *à mensâ et thoro*, in which the parties, though not released from the bonds of marriage, are not bound to live with one another.

* 1 Cor. vii. 6—16.

The perpetuity of the marriage-contract, except in the single case specified by the Divine Lawgiver, appears to me to be productive of the following advantages.

I. An union of interests is by this means complete. Could the union be terminated earlier, of course every married pair would begin their connexion with the perfect knowledge of this circumstance; and in many cases they would lay their plans accordingly. Can it be doubted that woman, the weaker vessel, would thus feel herself driven to the necessity of providing a fund of reserve when she might not have access to the same resources? The husband, aware of this temptation, would have his confidence in his wife diminished, and his character also impaired by suspicions often excited. Would not such a possible separation of interests be productive of a separation of affections, and beget coldness, alienation, and jealousy? Would it not be felt that where in other circumstances there was a suitableness of dispositions and temper, there were now incompatibility, variance, unkindness, and even personal violence?

II. The perpetuity of the marriage-contract induces a necessity of mutual compliance. "It necessarily happens," as Dr. Paley remarks, "that adverse tempers, habits, and tastes, oftentimes meet in marriage. In which case, each party must take pains to give up what offends, and practise what may gratify the other. A man and woman in love with each other do this insensibly; but love is neither general nor durable; and where that is wanting, no lessons of duty; no delicacy of sentiment, will go half so far with the

generality of mankind and womankind, as this one intelligible reflection, that they must each make the best of their bargain; and that seeing they must either both be miserable, or both share in the same happiness, neither can find their own comfort, but in promoting the pleasure of the other."

III. The impossibility of release from the marriage-contract is conducive to chastity of speech and behaviour. Had the case been otherwise, that love of novelty and variety which is natural to man, would here be productive of mischievous effects. In the probability of a divorce, the spirit of licentiousness would roam abroad, and soon, for the purpose of making way for another, would the wife be repudiated. As it is, the perpetuity of matrimonial engagements precludes the desire of release from them; and tends essentially to render the marriage union a permanent source of enjoyment.

IV. The perpetuity of the marriage-contract is peculiarly important to the interests of the children. This position, so palpably obvious, requires no elucidation. The close, indissoluble union of parents is essential to the moral and religious education of their offspring. But were divorce attainable, this union, in a multitude of cases, would neither be close nor lasting.

Perhaps the care and attentions of the mother are still more necessary to the training of children than those of the other parent. What mother does not feel much for her children, when she has the prospect of being soon called away from them by death, and of leaving them to the charge of a person who may

be afterwards invited to occupy her place in the family? What would be the situation of children in countries where divorce prevailed? “The father, having released himself from one wife, and married another, would soon forsake the second for a third; this for a fourth; and thus onward, without any known limit.—Who does not see with a glance, that even where humanity and principle reigned, these friendless beings would soon be neglected by the stepmother in favour of her own offspring. What must be their fate, where lewdness had succeeded to principle, and humanity had already been frozen out of the heart?”

Such is the importance of the perpetuity of the marriage-contract to the usefulness and even to the stability of this institution.

BOOK VIII.

ON THE DUTIES WHICH ARISE OUT OF THE CONSTITUTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY.

CHAPTER I.

THE ORIGIN OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

It is probable that the first government known among mankind was patriarchal. The account which is given to us in the Pentateuch of the longevity of man in the early ages of the world, and of the habits of pastoral life which prevailed, naturally leads us to this conclusion.

A consideration of the circumstances in which mankind are introduced into the world, and in which they are prepared for the duties and employments in which they are afterwards to engage, strengthens this opinion. Combined from the beginning into families or small communities, they are trained up under a system of discipline; and by being accustomed to render obedience to parental authority, they can afterwards more readily yield whatever subjection the arrangements of Providence may require from them.

Nor can we doubt that the parental authority would, more or less, continue during the parents' life. It would be revered by his offspring after his death; and they being united together by affection and habit, would be led, from motives of convenience and

security, “ to transfer their obedience to some one of the family, who, by his age or services, or by the part he possessed in the direction of their affairs during the lifetime of the parent, had already taught them to respect his advice, or to attend to his commands.”

In this way we may account for the origin of a tribe or clan, which as it increased in affluence and power would extend its authority ; so that surrounding families would incorporate themselves into it, that they might enjoy its protection.

Various causes might contribute to render this authority, vested in the chief of the clan, hereditary. His own personal accomplishments, his mental superiority, his skill in war, and wisdom in peace, would raise him in the estimation and affection of his clansmen ; and what could be more natural than to transfer the affectionate obedience to his son which they had given to him as their leader and commander ? When the sovereign power had been in the same family for some generations, prejudice, interest, indolence, and even reason, would suggest motives for rendering the possession perpetual.

But though in this way we are able to account for the origin of civil government, we still require to be informed of the grounds on which it is a duty in us to render it obedience. Why should I be called upon to obey laws which were framed by my ancestors, and to observe institutions which are enforced by mere human authority ? Does it not seem incongruous that millions of mankind, whose physical force when combined seems irresistible, should submit to the control, direction, and enactments, of a few of

their fellow-creatures? These enactments, in many instances, are not agreeable to my understanding, my taste, or to what I conceive to be the good of society; and why should I obey them?

To these inquiries I reply, without entering into the speculations of philosophers concerning the grounds of obedience to civil government, that Divine Revelation clearly shews it to be the will of God, that obedience should be given to the existing authorities.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE SUPPORT WHICH CHRISTIANITY RENDERS TO CIVIL GOVERNMENT.

CHRISTIANITY, while it has left our civil rights unimpaired, has clearly defined the character, and, in general, the duties of rulers and of subjects, in regard to each other. It has strongly inferred the duty of obedience to government. The principal passages in which this is enjoined are the following:—

“ Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers: for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not

the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour*."

"Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men †."

"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well-doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God ‡."

On these passages, and especially on the first, I make the following observations:

I. That the Apostle addresses himself to the favourite notion of the Jews, that they, as the peculiar people of God, were exempted from subjection to heathen rulers, and from paying them tribute. The sentiment accorded well with that proud and refractory spirit which they cherished; and seems to have been patronized by the Pharisees. This opinion

* Rom. xiii. 1—7. † Titus iii. 1, 2. ‡ 1 Peter ii. 13—18.

was at the foundation of that device of the chief priests and Scribes, in which, with the view of compassing the death of Christ, they employed spies, who feigned themselves to be just men, and sent them to propose an insidious question as to the lawfulness of paying tribute. They conceived that the answer of our Lord, whatever that should be, must inevitably produce his ruin. “ Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth ; neither carest thou for any man, for thouregardest not the person of men. Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not ? He perceived their wickedness ; and said unto them, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites ? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, whose is this image and superscription ? They say unto him Cæsar’s. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar’s ; and unto God the things that are Gods* ?”

Our Lord thus discountenanced the favourite notion of the Jews, and taught them the duty of obeying a Sovereign whom they themselves recognised, in every thing in which as a sovereign he had a right to command.

The Apostle, in like manner, taught the converts from the Jewish religion at Rome, among whom this opinion probably obtained, that they were cheerfully to submit to the existing authorities, and to obey the laws. However exalted in rank, and whatever office they held in the church, they were bound, in every thing lawful, to render obedience. “ Let every soul

* Math. xxii. 15—24.

be subject unto the higher powers." There is no privileged order, there are no persons who can claim, on any ground, exemption from this statute of Heaven.

II. The Apostle not only teaches us that *all* are to obey the civil government, but by the terms he employs, points out the nature of the obedience we are to render. It is to be a subjection to the higher powers ;—it is to be a subjection not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake ; a rendering to all their dues ; tribute to whom tribute is due ; custom to whom custom ; fear to whom fear ; honour to whom honour. Thus, obedience to the state is a duty binding upon the conscience, to be practised from a regard to the will of God, " for the transgression of which we shall be accountable at the tribunal of Divine justice, whether the magistrate be able to punish us for it or not." Our obedience, according to this rule, must be unreserved and universal,—extensive as are the demands of the laws of the land ; or as are the officers by whom the laws are administered. This duty, like every other, must be discharged as unto God and not to man, with deference to his authority, and zeal for his glory. As christians, we are called to the enjoyment of liberty ; but it is liberty from the bondage of sin, and not from the restraints of either human or divine government.

III. We are taught in these passages, that civil government is an ordinance of God. The governors of mankind, if they act agreeably to the design of their office, exercise an authority and a power delegated to them by the Sovereign Lord and Ruler of the

universe. They are His ministers, whatever be the nation over which they exercise jurisdiction; and designed, by the restraints which they legally impose, and the benefits which they confer, to promote the virtue and happiness of mankind. “Whether we take powers here for political authority, or for the persons actually exercising political power and jurisdiction, the sense will be the same. How men come by a rightful title to this power, or who has this title, the Apostle is wholly silent, and says nothing of it. To have meddled with that, would have been to decide of civil rights, contrary to the design and business of the Gospel, and the example of our Saviour, who refused meddling in such cases, with this decisive question, ‘Who made me a Judge or a Divider over you *?’”

IV. We are further taught in these passages of Scripture, what is the duty of the magistrate, and the design of civil government. “Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil;—they are the ministers of God to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” This duty is still more fully defined by the prophet in these words; “The Spirit of the Lord spake, the God of Israel said; He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God;—a duty incumbent upon all who make, or who administer the laws, from the highest to the lowest of the officers in the service of the government. I, therefore, infer,—

V. That there is nothing in these passages, nor, indeed, in any part of Scripture, which authorizes the doctrine of unlimited passive obedience. As well

* Locke's Paraphrase and Notes on the Romans.

might we attempt to prove from the language of our Lord, recorded in the sermon on the Mount*, that resistance to an injury in our persons and property is unlawful, and thus to subvert the foundation on which the necessity of magistracy rests, the punishment of evil-doers, who inflict such injuries. “It was prudent in the Apostle not to enter into any question relating to the right of resistance in some extraordinary cases; as those cases are comparatively few, and as the justest decisions which could have been given on that subject might possibly have been misrepresented, to his own detriment and that of the Gospel†.”

The inspired teachers, then, are to be understood as enforcing, by all the sanctions of religion, obedience to rulers. Christians are not, because they are Christians, and the subjects of a kingdom which is not of this world, exempted from obedience to civil government; nor are they, in virtue of their being Christians, deprived of their native rights as men, and as citizens. Whether they ought, in every case, to insist upon these rights, whether this conduct would be ornamental to their profession, or conducive to the progress of the Gospel, and to the advancement of their own best interests, are different questions.

But we can no more argue justly in favour of an unlimited passive obedience from the words of Scripture, “Let every soul be subject to the higher powers,” and from similar expressions, than we can in support of unlimited servitude and submission from such precepts as the following. “Servants, be sub-

* Matt. v. 39, 40.

† Doddridge.

ject to your masters. Children, obey your parents in all things. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands." If there be occasions when the commands of masters may be lawfully resisted ;—when children ought to decline obedience to the injunctions of their parents,—when wives are not bound to submit to their husbands, on what ground are we to believe that unlimited passive obedience is a duty? If exceptions to the general rule be implied in one case, why should they not be so in the other.

It is clear that cases may be supposed in which obedience to rulers ceases to be a duty, and in which we ought to obey God rather than man. We owe the God who made, and who redeemed us, supreme love and obedience ; and the solemn declarations which the Saviour has made to his disciples point out the obligations of steadfastly adhering to all his commandments. " He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me ; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me ; and he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me." Should governors, then, ask their subjects to do what is opposed to the will of God, or even to the law of the land, they ought not to be obeyed. With these exceptions, " let every soul be subject to the higher powers ;" resistance to them is most criminal.

If it be alleged, by way of objection to the view which I have now taken, that the primitive Christians, during the three first centuries, obeyed, and passively submitted, except in the single instance of religion, to the laws of the governments under which they lived,

however tyrannical and unprincipled—I may remark in reply, that the fact is to be accounted for, not by the supposition that their being Christians divested them of their rights as citizens, but by the circumstance of which they were fully aware, that they promoted, in this way, the glory of God, illustrated the efficacy of the Gospel, and were instrumental by their gentleness and their sufferings in its rapid promulgation.

In respect to their gentleness, self-denial, and readiness to suffer according to the will of God, I think they are a pattern to true Christians in every age. Nothing appears to me more unseemly than that such persons should be the abettors of a political faction; or, that they should not always be distinguished as the quiet, disinterested, and patriotic, in the land. “Had the primitive Christians explained the Apostle’s doctrine with so many exceptions, and limitations, and cautions, as numbers do at present, and acted accordingly; and had Christianity assumed that political aspect which it has generally borne in latter ages, nothing but a constant succession of miracles could have prevented its extirpation.”

CHAPTER III.

ON THE DUTY OF RULERS.

CHRISTIANITY strengthens the bonds of civil society by defining the duties which rulers are enjoined to practise, and enforcing the obedience which subjects are commanded to render.

With regard to the first particular, the duties of rulers, it speaks both in direct terms, and by implication. It does not, indeed, notice the comparative merits of the different forms of civil polity; nor inform us which is most conducive to the improvement and happiness of mankind. It does not determine whether the sovereign power should be in one or in many, or in what manner it ought to be divided in its exercise. On these, and on several other points connected with civil government, it is, for obvious reasons, silent. But it is just as hostile to tyranny and oppression in the ruler, as it is to licentiousness and insubordination in the subject. It does not tolerate vices in one class of society which it forbids and condemns in another. Every undue stretch of power is wrong because it goes beyond that limit which the source of all authority, the Supreme Moral Governor of the world, has delegated to his servants;—because it tends to subvert the true interests of society, and the ends of just government;—because it is at variance with the law which enjoins us to do unto others as we would wish others to do unto us; and because it is expressly forbidden by the sovereign Judge, at whose tribunal all must give an account.

Christianity is so far from countenancing any thing unjust, or arbitrary, or oppressive in governors, that it severely reprobates it, and reminds them that they also have a Master in heaven. It tends to counteract, by the spirit which it cherishes, the moral evils which naturally flow from a diversity of rank and of circumstances, by fixing our chief attention on those virtues and attainments which alone will avail us in eternity;

it teaches the insignificance of mere earthly elevation; and by placing the monarch and the lowest of his subjects on the same level in the worship of Him before whom all outward distinctions vanish, it is favourable to that humility of mind which in his sight is of great value. Thus, it teaches those who are elevated by rank and office, that their elevation is designed for the public good; that all, whatever be their external circumstances, ought to regard each other as members of the same family, as accountable at the same tribunal, as inheriting the infirmities of the same fallen nature, as requiring the same almighty Saviour to redeem them, and as needing the same consolations and hopes in life, and in looking forward to eternity.

I cannot here even enumerate the qualifications and duties of rulers: I shall merely suggest some of the most prominent.

I. The ruler of the people should be a man that fears God. If it be the duty of all to love and reverence God, and supplicate his favour, and entertain a sense of their dependance upon him, it is especially the duty of him who is elevated from a private to a public station, and who requires the divine assistance to enable him to discharge his numerous obligations. This is the only sure pledge that his talents, however splendid, will be employed beneficially; and that in place of seeking the advancement of his own interests, he will sincerely aim at promoting the real good of the public and of the country. Nor is it visionary to expect that God will render pious rulers eminent blessings to the people whom they govern.

II. A ruler should be just. He ought to be a man who respects the rights of others, and who feels the criminality of violating them. It is the declaration of God—He that ruleth over men must be just. Is he a legislator? Justice will be the foundation of the laws which he enacts. Is he a judge? His interpretations of the law, and his decisions, will be impartial and just. He will do no unrighteousness in judgment; nor will he respect the person of the poor, or honour the person of the mighty; but in righteousness will he judge his neighbour. Is he intrusted with the executive government? He will faithfully, and in conformity to the laws, perform the duty assigned him.

III. A ruler must have regard to the happiness of men. In the exercise of enlarged benevolence he will look to the good which he may be the means of accomplishing, not only to the existing, but to future generations. He will regard himself as the minister of God for advancing the good of his fellow-creatures; and the blessings which flow from his government will lead others to regard him in this character. The administration of law he will temper with mercy. The wrongs of the people he will, if possible, prevent, and always hasten to remove. He will employ his power, in imitation of that God whose goodness extends unto all, in diffusing happiness around him, and in extending the influence of pure and undefiled religion, by which alone the virtue and happiness of man can be effectually promoted.

IV. A ruler should respect the laws of his country. He should do so not only generally, but in every

particular, in all that relates to his own official conduct, and in whatever affects the rights of others. On every principle he is bound to shew this deference to the laws;—from his love of justice, of rational liberty, and of the peace and prosperity of his country. He ought, therefore, to be well acquainted with the constitution and laws of the realm.

To the king of Israel it was enjoined: “It shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write a copy of this law in a book, and it shall be with him; and he shall read therein all the days of his life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law, and these statutes to do them; that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren; and that he turn not aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left*.”

V. A ruler is bound to exhibit a good example. As a man, he ought in his own conduct to be blameless; to be a pattern in his obedience to the laws of God and of man; and to lead others by the silent but powerful influence of his virtues to honour God, and to keep his commandments. He should be regular in the observance of his duties to God, in revering his name and ordinances, in remembering and sanctifying the sabbath, and, generally, in practising the things that are true, and just, and honest, and lovely, and of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise. He will, in this way, render his elevation a public blessing, the means of checking vice, and of encouraging and diffusing virtue. His eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that

* Deut. xvii. 19, 20.

they may dwell with him; he that walketh in a perfect way shall serve him: he that worketh deceit shall not be in his house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in his sight.

There is not a greater earthly blessing than pious and just rulers, nor any for which the people have greater cause to be thankful. When God denounced judgments against Israel he threatened them with the removal of such rulers from all the departments of the government. “Behold the Lord, the Lord of hosts, doth take away from Jerusalem, and from Judah, the stay and the staff; the whole stay of bread, and the whole stay of water; the mighty man and the man of war; the judge and the prophet, and the prudent, and the ancient; the captain of fifty, and the honourable man, and the counsellor, and the cunning artificer, and the eloquent orator. And I will give children to be their princes; and babes shall rule over them. And the people shall be oppressed, every one by another, and every one by his neighbour*.”

When we reflect on all that good rulers may be instrumental in accomplishing,—not merely in averting the numerous evils which affect the liberty, the property, and the life of man,—but in the blessings which they communicate, the privileges which they guard, the institutions for promoting the education, comfort, safety, usefulness, religion, and morals, of unborn millions, which they patronize, we cannot but regard the judgment here denounced as one of the very heaviest that can fall on mankind.

* Isa. iii. 1—5.

CHAPTER IV.

THE DUTY OF SUBJECTS.

WE cannot impress too deeply on our mind a sense of the great importance of a faithful discharge of our obligations to the government under which we live, and which we are bound by so many ties to support and defend. These obligations are numerous; and the Scripture by enforcing them by all the sanctions of religion, strengthens greatly the bands of civil society.

I. Christianity inculcates on subjects the duty of obedience to their rulers. To this I have already adverted, and only again recur to it for the purpose of making a very few additional observations. This duty is enforced by far higher motives, and on much surer grounds, by Divine Revelation, than it is possible for unaided reason to suggest. It commands its disciples to regard the existing authorities, without any inquiry as to their origin, as appointed by God; and to give them the prompt and universal obedience due to Him whose will they express, and whose benevolent designs they are intended to promote. It represents governors as the servants of God, and exercising, in the discharge of their office, a power delegated to them by the Sovereign Ruler of all things.

Thus, obedience to magistrates is enjoined by the authority of God;—an authority which must influence

the conscience, and secure to the ordinances of civil government a faithful observance. A provision is made for the order and stability of society, by making disobedience to lawful authority a sin equal in aggravation to a trespass of the law of God. Christianity binds subjects to obedience by far greater penalties than it is in the power of magistrates to inflict—by the pains of God's displeasure; and reminds them of an approaching day, in which they must answer at his tribunal for this part of their conduct.

II. The particular duties which we owe to our rulers, and the manner in which these duties ought to be performed, are specified in the Scriptures. In our obedience to civil magistrates we are there required to have God, his authority, and glory, constantly in view; and to consider them as entitled to our subjection, not because they have greater power than we, but because they are the officers of the King Eternal, and rule by his commission. Unless we view them in this light we wrong him whose servants they are,—just as much as we should wrong the monarch to whose representative we did not render due honour.

Subjects are not at liberty, on account of the vices of their rulers, to forget the dignity and authority of their office. Nor are they in the slightest degree, in consequence of these personal sins, exempted from obedience. Nor are they, on any principle of christian duty allowed to speak evil of them, or to bring railing accusations against them. While they may cautiously and modestly exercise their judgment on the public conduct of their rulers, they are to speak

evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men. The example of our Lord and Master is in this as in all other respects to be imitated; who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously. Nor are we at liberty, according to the Christian law, even to wish evil in our thoughts to our governors, under a mistaken impression as to the utility of their measures. "Curse not the king, no not in thy thoughts; for a bird of the air shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall tell the matter*."

They are enjoined to pray constantly and heartily for their rulers. This duty, I fear, we are apt to discharge as a form,—as a customary petition, which it would be indecent to omit. In what a different light does its importance appear by the language in which it is enforced. "I exhort," says the Apostle Paul, "that first of all, supplications, prayers, and intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour." The disposition of mind required in presenting such supplications before the throne of grace is not less favourable to our own happiness, than it is to the peace and harmony of society.

We owe our rulers gratitude for the blessings which, under Providence, we enjoy by their government. I am satisfied that the spirit of Christianity requires us to cherish this kind and grateful feeling towards the

* Proverbs.

magistracy of our land. How numerous are our mercies and privileges! When we compare our state, as to religious knowledge and civil and religious freedom, with that of the other nations of Europe,—have we not abundant cause of thankfulness to Him who has made so great a difference in our favour? A large portion of the world is enveloped in heathen and in Mohammedan darkness; but we live under a government which gives every facility to the progress of christian knowledge, and to the circulation of the Scriptures. In this land, and under the protection of this government, many a scheme of philanthropy, formed for the purpose of sending temporal and spiritual blessings to other nations, has had its origin. To the seditious profligate and the unbeliever there may be nothing in this to endear to them the British isles, and the free and unrivalled government which Divine Providence has placed over them; but there is in this, notwithstanding, much to awaken the patriotic and grateful feelings of all who think aright towards God and towards men.

We should, I apprehend, be more disposed to cherish grateful feelings towards our rulers did we consider the advantages resulting from any government, even the worst, rather than anarchy. Under every government property is in a greater or less degree protected, and industry encouraged; whereas, from anarchy universal ruin would soon follow. “It is melancholy, but it is nevertheless true, that men are never so apt to throw off all regard to decency as in the time of some great public calamity, when cities

are overturned by earthquake or depopulated by pestilence; for then the law loses its power. In short, we may presume that the disorders incident to the natural state would be so great, that if it were to be at all, it could not be of any long continuance*."

Were there no restraints on the evil passions of mankind, persons of true piety would suffer more than the unprincipled government of Nero and Diocletian inflicted. They, in particular, have great cause of thankfulness to God for a government which protects their lives and property, which recognises as sacred the rights of conscience, and which forms their safeguard and defence while moving onwards to a better, even an heavenly, country.

Subjects are further bound to put the most candid and charitable construction on the conduct and measures of their rulers. They are men, and are therefore liable, even with the best intentions, to err; and can we expect human beings to be exempted from this liability? Every government, however excellent, is of human origin; and, therefore, partakes of the imperfections which attach to whatever is of man's devising and administration. It is a duty which we owe to all men not to judge them rashly, or with asperity; and we owe it more particularly to our rulers as our superiors. That the infidel, whose views of the real condition of man and of his destiny are at variance with truth, should ignorantly impute to his rulers evils which no earthly government can prevent,—that he should array human nature with an imaginary perfection, and attempt to persuade himself and others,

* Beattie's *Elements of Moral Science*, vol. ii p. 151.

that but for existing institutions the inhabitants of the world would soon arrive at a high degree of happiness;—and that he should people the regions of his fancy with beings not subject to the infirmities and miseries of men;—these are errors which very naturally proceed from the darkness and presumption of unbelief in regard to divine revelation. But surely they who receive the representations of the oracles of God respecting all that man now is, and all that man is yet to be,—his apostasy from God, and the many evils to which this apostasy and consequent corruption give rise,—cannot expect to be exempted from sufferings in this world, or imagine that the best human government can save sinful beings from many calamities, or convert this earth, on which the malediction of the Creator rests, into a paradise.

We are, indeed, prone to impute the evils we endure to any cause rather than to our own desert; and this propensity very naturally leads ignorant and self-confident persons to suppose that a change of the form of government, or of the agents by whom it is administered, will remove their sufferings—like those who are affected with fever, who imagine that a mere change of position will bring them relief, till experience teaches them that the disease is within. An army of cowards would most confidently ascribe the disasters to which its own cowardice gives rise to its generals, and would affirm that under other leaders they should be victorious.

Let those who believe the divine authority of the Book which tells us that in the world we shall have tribulation, that here we have no continuing city or

place of abode,—beware of blaming man for withholding from us what the righteous government of God has denied us ; and in place of criminating, or attempting to criminate, rulers, let us cherish thankfulness for the mercies we possess, and endeavour to improve them.

III. Christianity strengthens civil government by inculcating the principles of peace. I do not say, that it renders war in every case criminal ; or that it, even remotely, discourages us from defending our lives, property, and privileges. But it unquestionably forms those dispositions, and enforces those principles, which naturally lead to the utter extinction of the arts of violence and destruction. It breathes so much peace and good-will to men—it expresses such a deep and overcoming earnestness in regard to the salvation of human beings, that it is impossible sincerely to embrace it without entertaining towards our fellow-creatures a kindliness of feeling, which, if it be not incompatible with war, is incompatible with the indulgence of the passions that give rise to it. Independently of its aptitude to subdue the human heart, and to eradicate its malice and envy, there is an opposition between its often-repeated injunctions, and the pride, ambition, and covetousness, in which the hostilities of nations and rebellions against lawful authority have their origin. Though christianity had contained no other precept to direct its disciples in their conduct towards those who injure them, but that which its Divine Author himself delivered, it were sufficient to make all who revere his sayings willing to err on the score of unresenting passiveness, than of

that of vindictiveness. “ I say unto you, love your enemies ; bless them that curse you ; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you ; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.”

The enemies of christianity will allow, that it has at least introduced humanity into the practice of war, and into the intercourse of civilized nations. It tells us of a period when its efficacy will subdue the passions of men—when to its peaceful sway all kings and legislators and tribes of the earth shall bow,—and when, according to its own beautiful language, its triumphs shall reach from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth. We can discover in what it has already done the earnest of this future age, and can discover in the purifying tendency of its doctrines,—its powerful incentives to charity and benevolence,—and in the disinterestedness and self-denial which it imposes on its disciples, the means by which, under a higher agency, it will succeed in accomplishing this, and all its predictions. Towards this blessed consummation it is at present advancing, silently but effectually removing the barriers which the corruptions of mankind oppose to its progress ; augmenting the benefits of civilization and social union, while it goes on to the attainment of its final purposes ; establishing the tranquillity and internal order of the communities which afford it protection ; and disseminating the seeds of that glorious harvest, which will cover the face of the world with fruit. Possessing the grandeur and comprehensiveness of His plans whose institute it is, it communicates without violence, and

almost without observation, its benefits to mankind ; and like the elements of nature, the operation of which, though unseen, is ever constant, it will advance with a resistless progress, till the arrival of its brightest era, when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ, and he shall reign for ever. “ They shall then beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks, nation shall not lift sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

IV. Subjects are bound conscientiously to pay the taxes imposed by government. They are to render to all their dues ; tribute to whom tribute is due, and custom to whom custom. To this part of the duty of subjects I adverted in a former part of this work ; and shall now do little more than remark its very great importance in reference to our own character, and to the virtue of others.

“ In the payment of taxes and of other branches of public revenue, persons who would hold themselves deeply injured, were their honesty and integrity called in question, are sometimes very blameable. They will contrive, in various articles of taxation, to pay less than they ought to pay : perhaps by delivering defective accounts of the possessions or indulgences for which they are liable to taxes ;—or by some other misrepresentation of which they are conscious. Commodities which have been illegally introduced they will not hesitate to purchase ; because such articles may be obtained for less money than those on which custom is paid. Remember, therefore, that to defraud your governors in the discharge of taxes, is to rob the

public ; is to rob all the inhabitants of the land ; is to rob your honest neighbour, who must discharge his portion of new taxes rendered necessary by the dishonesty of those men who do not sustain their full share of the existing burdens. Remember that to purchase smuggled or contraband goods is not only to rob the public, but is to commit a sin resembling that of buying articles which have been stolen. It is to purchase that which does not legally belong to the seller. It is to encourage him to persevere in his habits of iniquity. Remember also, that he who has in any way been guilty of purloining, or of withholding from his country, is bound to prove his repentance by restitution *."

• Gisborne's Christian Morals, p. 246.

NOTE

Referred to in page 170.

I AM far from wishing to bring against the poet the charge of Spinosism and Pantheism ; or, from attaching to his expressions an heretical signification. I have quoted them, because they have been understood by some to convey the doctrine of the *Anima Mundi*, as held by philosophers, both ancient and modern ; and because, to those who are unacquainted with that doctrine, they are calculated to give a lively representation of it. If his words are to be understood as merely expressing the scriptural doctrine of the omnipresence of God, they must be considered as peculiarly beautiful and even sublime. I agree with Professor Stewart in thinking, that “on a subject so infinitely disproportioned to our faculties, it is vain to expect language which will bear a logical and captious examination. Even the sacred writers themselves are forced to adapt their phraseology to the comprehension of those to whom it is addressed, and frequently borrow the figurative diction of poetry to convey ideas which must be interpreted, not according to the letter, but the spirit of the passage. It is thus that thunder is called the voice of God ; the wind, his breath ; and the tempest, the blast of his nostrils. Not attending to this circumstance, or rather, not choosing to direct to it the attention of his readers, Spinoza has laid hold of the well-known expression of St. Paul, that ‘in God we live and move and have our being,’ as a proof that the ideas of the Apostle, concerning the divine nature, were pretty much the same with his own.” (*Dissertation*, Part ii. p. 79.)

Whether the doctrine of the *Anima Mundi*, according to which, the souls of men are portions of the Supreme Being with whom they are re-united at death, and in whom they are finally absorbed and lost, “would have been loudly disclaimed by Epictetus, Antoninus, and all the wisest and soberest of the Stoical school,” it is perhaps unnecessary to determine; but one thing is incontrovertible, that this doctrine formed a tenet of the Stoical philosophy.

Lord Herbert, who cannot be charged with entertaining prejudices against the heathen philosophy, observes, that the Gentiles did not only worship the whole world taken together, but its parts, yea, even its particles or smaller parts; thinking it unbecoming, that some of the more eminent parts of him whom they regarded as God should be worshipped, and other parts neglected. And therefore they judged, that it would be a base and impious thing to render worship to this or that star or element, and reject the others as vile and worthless. And, in worshipping the world as consisting of those parts, they thought they worshipped the supreme God. (*De Relig. Gentil.* p. 133, 134.)

“The pagans in general,” says Dr. Cudworth, “even the most refined of them, agreed in these two things; first, in breaking and crumbling the one simple Deity, and multiplying it into many gods, or parcelling it out into several particular notions, according to its several powers and virtues; and then, in theologizing the whole world, and deifying the natures of things, accidents, and inanimate bodies. They supposing God to pervade all things, and himself to be in a manner all things.” (*Intel. Syst.* p. 532.) The same learned writer elsewhere observes, “that the pagans were universally world-worshippers, in one sense or other; not that they worshipped the world as a dead, inanimate thing, but either as the body of God, or as the temple or image of God.” (*Intell. Syst.* p. 538.) On this principle, one of the Stoics is represented by Cicero as arguing for the divinity of the stars. *Hac mundi divi-*

nitatē perspectā, tribuenda est sideribus eadem divinitas, ut ea quoque rectissimè et animantia esse, et sentire atque, intelligere dicantur—ex quo efficitur in Deorum numero astra esse ducenda. (*De Nat. Deor.* lib. ii. cap. 15.) Seneca, one of the most eminent of the Stoical school, regarded human beings as parts of the Divinity. Quid est autem, cur non existimes in eo divini aliquid existere, qui Dei pars est? Totum hoc quo continemur, et unum est et Deus; et socii ejus sumus et membra.—Epictetus taught that “man is a distinct portion of the Divine essence, and contains a part of God in himself.” (Miss Carter’s *Translation*, 2d b. chap. 8. sect. 2.) Antoninus represents the soul (αὐτοψόσια) as an efflux or emanation from the governor of the world. (Lib. ii. sect. 4.)—And on the principle that the deity is the soul of the world he addresses his prayer to the world. (Lib. iv. sect. 23.)

“It were well,” says the learned Leland, “if the absurdity of this way of philosophizing were the worst of it. But besides that it gave occasion to some of those extravagant flights of the Stoics, so unbecoming dependent creatures, as if they had a divinity and sufficiency in themselves, which placed them in several respects on an equality with God—this notion was made use of for supporting the Pagan idolatry, and was therefore of the most pernicious consequence to the interests of religion. For upon this principle they deified the several parts of the world, and things of nature, and worshipped them as gods or parts of God. Cicero, in his *Academics*, gives this representation of the sentiments of the Stoics; that they held that “this world is wise, and hath a mind or soul, whereby it formed or fabricated both it and itself, and ordereth, moveth, and governeth all things: and that the sun, moon, and all the stars are gods, because a certain animal intelligence pervadeth and passeth through all things.” (Cic. *Acad.* lib. ii. cap. 37.) In like manner, the great and learned Varro expressly says that the soul of the world, and its parts, are

the true gods ; and represents this as the sentiment of those who had the justest notions, and were acquainted with the secrets of learning.

“ Thus it appears,” continues this learned writer, “ that the one God of these philosophers was really an aggregate of deities. The unity of God *which* they pleaded for, was the unity of the world, which consisteth of innumerable parts ; and accordingly, the great stoical argument to prove that there is one God was, that there is but one world ; but this one divinity was multiplied into as many gods as there were parts of the world, all animated by the same universal soul, and all of them parts of the one God. This theology or philosophy, therefore, furnished a pretext for worshipping the several parts of the world, and the powers and virtue diffused through the parts of it, under the name of the popular divinities. And thus, instead of curing the popular superstition and polytheism, they confirmed and established it, and as Plutarch charges the Stoics, filled the air, heaven, earth and sea, with gods.”—*(Leland on the Christian Revelation, vol. i. p. 254, 255.)*

THE END.

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